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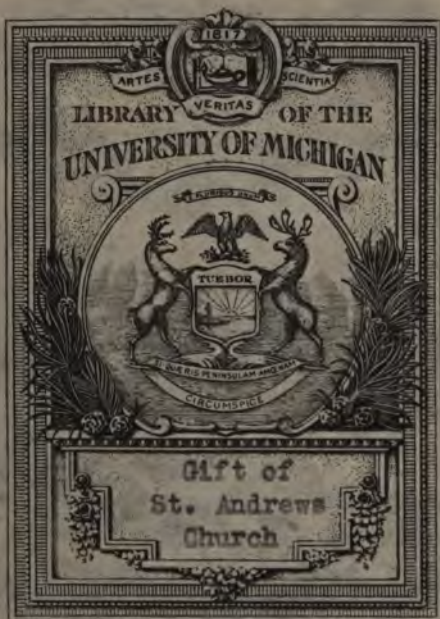
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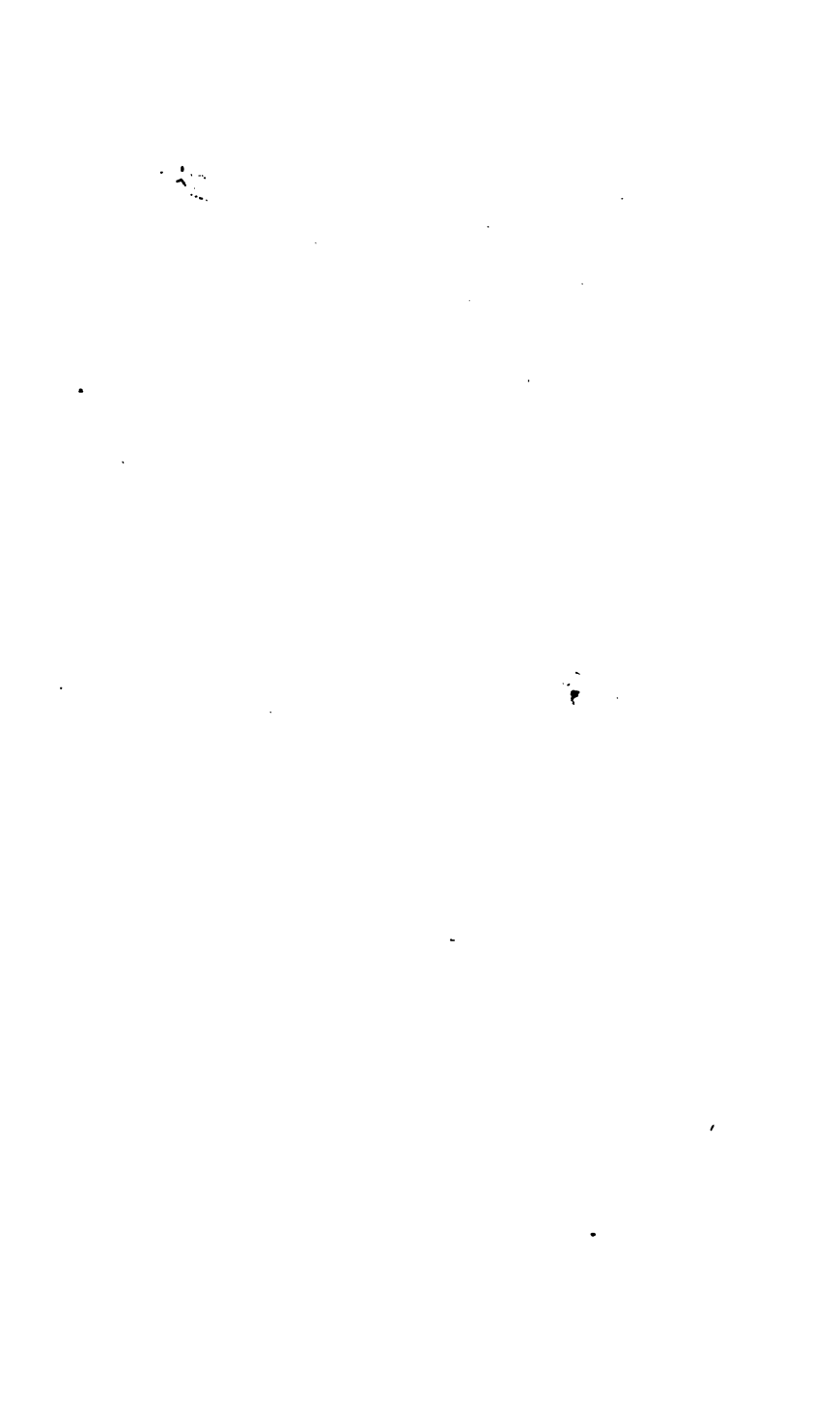
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A most excellent
book and worthy of
careful reading

R.

CHRISTIANITY
JUDGED BY ITS FRUITS.



CHRISTIANITY



JUDGED BY ITS FRUITS.

BY THE

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CHAPLAIN OF THE ROYAL INDIAN ENGINEERING COLLEGE,
COOPERS HILL.

~~~~~  
"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"

"The Father, abiding in Me, doeth His works."  
~~~~~

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THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE COMMITTEE OF THE
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ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS little book embodies the results of an independent attempt to trace the practical effects of the Christian Faith upon the condition of man. It has been the writer's aim to present to every-day readers, in a concise form, a collection of facts and considerations which no impartial judge of the claims of Christianity can afford to ignore.

Some of the ground traversed has been more closely surveyed in Brace's "Gesta Christi," a valuable and laborious, though not always accurate work; to which, however, the present writer is in no way indebted, as it was not brought under his notice until after the following pages were in print.

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CHRISTIANITY JUDGED BY ITS FRUITS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

FROM the beginning it has been the fate of Christianity to encounter continuous opposition; but the grounds of objection to it, the method of attack, and the degree of hostility with which it is assailed, are continually undergoing change. Objections have been urged against it, because it points to a God Who is a Spirit: because it claims to be supernatural: because it refuses to take rank on a par with other religions: because it declares the Bible to contain a Divine revelation: because outrages have been committed in its name: because its demands are too exacting. Physical Science, Literary Criticism, Ethnology, History, Fiction,—through each of these is the assault delivered, until it has become, so to say, an attack along the whole line, urged on with all the force that organized co-operation can give to the power of pen and tongue.

These several objections have been submitted to repeated examination in detail. The acutest intellects have exercised themselves in making minute

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surveys of different parts of the field. And the learned and philosophical Christian inquirer has no reason to be dissatisfied with the result.

In addition, however, to these objections in detail, and in some measure as a result of them, there is, in these days, yet another source of opposition to our Faith, which influences perhaps a larger number of persons than all of them together. It has acquired much of the prestige of being fashionable, openly to renounce allegiance to the Prophet of Nazareth¹. It is fashionable among many of that numerous class which would fain be accounted philosophical, to assert that modern culture and advanced thought have declared against Christianity. Such people do not reflect that what they are so disposed to overlook, as obsolete and unreasonable, may itself upon inquiry prove to be, as a matter of fact, the one thing to which, beyond all others, they are most indebted for all that they have of culture and of goodness.

It is assumed that this nineteenth century world could very well go on without Christianity; and that the motive forces, to which the

¹ Speaking as a man of the world, an Italian statesman said to me, not long ago, "It is now the fashion to decry Christianity. *But that will not last, because men cannot do without religion.*"

progress of society is due, would be none the less powerful for good, if the Gospel was forgotten. But on what principle can this assumption be defended? Surely it is altogether indefensible, until a careful and impartial examination of the facts of history shall have made it clear that the thing assumed is at least probable.

By some men, Jesus Christ is represented as an illustrious philosopher, whose teaching, greatly in advance of his age, has indeed in times past been the cause of much good to man, but is now effete and obsolete. For others, Jesus Christ is the Divine Saviour of a lost world helplessly lying in wickedness. On which side is the truth? The Christian, who has learnt to know Christ, declares with all the energy of his soul, that the matter does not admit of question. In knowing Christ he knows the Father Who sent Him. And dead as he was in trespasses and sins, he has found in that knowledge eternal life. Christ is his only refuge in temptation; his only strength in weakness; ever a very present help in trouble. Christ is the source of all his happiness, a happiness ineffable, a peace that passeth all understanding. To others such language as this is no more than empty words, descriptive of a fond delusion.

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Thus the testimony of what purports to be the individual experience of different persons is contradictory. It is not, however, the aim of the following pages to weigh the opinion of one class of individuals against the opinion of another class of individuals. Such examinations are often fallacious. Neither is it a main object to insist upon the obvious fact, that those who have put a remedy to the proof are more competent witnesses of its value than those who have not tried it. The argument is much more comprehensive. The appeal is made to history. And seeing that history not only discloses a long array of facts in connection with Christianity, which are without a parallel in the annals of human progress, but that it also shews that the action of Christianity is altogether different from the action of non-Christian religions, or non-Christian philosophies, it is concluded that Christianity must be more than a mere philosophic or religious system,—like other systems, the outcome of the human mind. And seeing also, that whatever is unique in the growth and in the operation of Christianity, becomes intelligible,—nay, natural,—on the Christian hypothesis, that the Divine Creator was in the Man Christ Jesus, it is further concluded, that it is altogether irra-

tional lightly to assume that the Author of Christianity was no more than man; that therefore Christianity may be safely permitted to perish; and that, in place of going on to develop still further the germs from which it has sprung, modern civilization may be rudely plucked up from the religious soil in which it has grown, and be transplanted, half blown, into the untried and uncongenial ground of irreligion.

The argument has to do with history, not with theology. This procedure does not forbid an appeal to the Bible. Reference will be made to it, however, not as containing a system of Divinely inspired instruction, but as being a collection of historic documents. It will be used merely for the purpose of establishing such facts as it is impossible to deny without rejecting the force of all historic testimony. It will be impossible also wholly to pass by the writings of the Christian apologists. But no use will be made of their authority which might seem exposed to the suspicion of partiality; and to a large extent the argument will rest upon facts attested by writers who are either confessedly independent, or professedly anti-Christian.

From the days of Constantine there has ever been such a mutual action and reaction of the

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ecclesiastical and civil authorities upon each other, that it is often difficult to say under which authority particular changes have been effected. It will not concern us, however, so much to determine by what instrumentality improvements have been brought about, as to ascertain the nature of the force which has produced them. Whether a change has been effected by the direct action of Christian principles silently spreading like a spiritual contagion in the hearts of men, or whether it results from a purely ecclesiastical enactment, or whether it is due to the exercise of civil authority, is a matter of little moment. The real question which it is important to determine is this:—Is the change due to the influence of Jesus?

As little again have we to say to the orthodoxy of those through whose agency distinctly Christian work has been done. It is not in the intellect versed in philosophical divinity, but in the heart imbued with the principles which Christ at once exemplified, taught, and implanted, that the power of Christianity resides; and we have to do with the power, the productive energy of Christianity in the hearts of men, not with the specific systems of theology which they profess.

It is not easy to overrate the high importance

of dogma. Dogma is the vessel in which the leaven of Christianity is preserved, and it would be a most interesting and important inquiry to examine the relation between the soundness of the vessel and the energy of the leaven. But what we have to do with is not the vessel. It is the leaven itself. And the essence and virtue of that leaven consists in a personal realization of the truth of the facts disclosed in the Gospel, a personal knowledge of the only true God and Him Whom He has sent. And whenever we find anything distinctly Christian in its character, done in virtue of such realization, however imperfect, and by the power of such a knowledge, however partial, we are clearly entitled to claim it as a direct fruit of Christianity.

It is important to bear this in mind, for it has happened more than once that some of the most potent influences of Christianity have gone forth in an irregular way. In times of quiet security the great body of Christian people has often forgotten some important aspect of Christian truth. But even at such times the truth is not lost, nor does God leave Himself without a witness. In the good ground of simple earnest minds, the Divinely planted germ shews that it has not lost its vitality. Again and again, mis-

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taking them for some unholy growth, men have striven to uproot from the soil the rising shoots. But they have always striven in vain. The shoots have sprung up and brought forth fruit,—fruit on which men have fed rejoicing,—grapes and figs, which cannot be gathered of thorns and thistles. Whatever of good has been effected in the world by a Wesley or a Penn, is as much due to Christianity, as anything ever achieved by the greatest champion of ecclesiastical order, or of doctrinal orthodoxy.

All thoughtful minds, which have given any attention to the subject, have been struck by the fact that Christianity has been in many ways remarkably connected with the progress of civilization. Much learning has been employed in tracing that connection along different particular lines of research. It is the aim of the present treatise to collect some of the scattered results of this learned labour into a systematic digest, in the hope that from a simple statement of well-ascertained historic facts, men may the more readily see at once what a large share Christianity has had in drawing them up to the elevation which they occupy, and how far they still are from having attained the height towards which it is even now sensibly lifting them.

CHAPTER II.

DARKNESS AND LIGHT.

CHRISTIANITY is not singular in representing man as in an evil plight. Heathen writers,—as well those who painted the image of events as they passed before them, as those who sought to discover the hidden reasons of things,—have testified to their dissatisfaction with the lot of man¹. Nor is this testimony confined to times of adversity, or to men of morose and misanthropic disposition. Take an age in which an educated man in easy circumstances ought to have been able to see life in a pleasant light, and take the gayest writer of that age. You remember how the brightest scene of life which the imagination of Horace could portray was felt by him to be deficient,—to lack a something, of the absence of which he was painfully conscious, although he could but vaguely fancy what it

¹ *Sophocles*, *Antig.* 604 sq.; 951 sq.; *Æd. R.* 1186 sq.; *Æd. Col.* 1215 sq.; *Trach.* 1 sq.; 943 sq.

was², and how to his eye neither galley nor steed could rescue any man from the oppressive presence of wearisome care³. You remember also how he saw the necessity of seeking safety from the insupportable misery which he describes⁴. And you are well aware that similar sentiments find the strongest expression in the pages of other heathen writers⁵. Over and over again in those pages appear the same sad symptoms,—spiritual disquietude, a boding sense of sorer woe impending, paralysis of noble action. Quite independently of the testimony of Scripture, the mournful lament of suffering humanity, finding utterance in every language, witnesses to the fact that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint⁶.”

In this suffering, the remedy to which men have ever instinctively turned is religion. It has been too often assumed that the natural refuge of the

² *Horace*, *Carm.* iii. 24, 62-4.

³ *Id.*, *Carm.* ii. 16. 21; sq. iii. 1. 37 sq.; *Sat.* ii. 7. 111 sq.; *Epist.* i. 11. 25 sq.; 14. 13.

⁴ *Id.*, *Epist.* i. 1. 23.

⁵ Cf. *Ovid*, *Metam.* vii. 18 sq.:—

“Si possem, sanior essem.

Sed trahit invitam nova vis; aliudque cupido,

Mens aliud suadet. Video meliora proboque:

Deteriora sequor.”

Plato, *Phædrus*, 34; *Xenophon*, *Cyrop.* vi. 1. 41; *Euripides*, *Medea*, 1078 sq.

⁶ *Isaiah* i. 5.

diseased mind is philosophy, and not religion. Facts however are altogether against this assumption. We have formed our ideas of the state of religion at the beginning of the Christian era too exclusively from the literature of the day, without remembering, that literature presents to us, chiefly, the views of those whose culture had led them to regard with incredulity or indifference the debased religion which prevailed among the people.

But literature is by no means the only source,—perhaps it is scarcely even the most reliable source,—of information, as to the extent to which religious belief prevailed. The monuments which have come down to us furnish a distinct, and certainly no less trustworthy channel of information. In all parts of the Roman world have been found great numbers of monumental inscriptions, in which we read the minds, not of the few, but of the general mass of the people. And these stones bear witness for the most part to an artless, unquestioning, positive faith in the divinities of polytheism.

At first sight the influences of criticism and of culture may seem to have triumphed over the national religion, but closer inquiry gives us no reason to suppose that hostility to religion, even

at the time of its greatest strength, ever spread beyond the necessarily narrow circle of the instructed classes. The current of scepticism was never more than local and superficial, and it was soon driven back by the mightier flood of the people's faith⁷. Indeed it does not seem that the sceptical literature of the day exercised any more general or permanent influence upon the popular belief in the national gods, than did the philosophy of the 18th century upon European Christianity.

The best indeed among the philosophic heathen did not pretend to think that philosophy could supplant religion as the general source of relief. The instructed classes, generally, saw that religion was necessary to uphold morality⁸. Strabo declares it to be impossible to bring the mass of women, and the lower people to piety, to holiness, and to faith, by the instruction of philosophy⁹; and the confidential adviser of Augustus laid down the principle with much emphasis that those who despised the gods could have no respect for man¹⁰. The religion, it is true, which the thoughtful recognised to be so necessary for the common people, was too debased, too much over-

⁷ *Friedlaender*, *Sittengeschichte*, vol. iv, p. 256 sq.

⁸ *Cicero*, *De Legibus*, ii. 7; *De Nat. Deorum*, i. 2.

⁹ *Strabo*, i. 2.

¹⁰ *Dion Cassius*, lii. 36.

laid with vile superstitions, to recommend itself in its gross form to their own minds. *They* betook themselves to philosophy as a corrective.

This is not the place to enlarge upon the excellence of non-Christian teaching. But it ought to have full credit for attaining the highest standard of moral and religious instruction to which it is entitled. It would be unjust to withhold from it any praise which rightfully belongs to it; and I can be exposed to no suspicion of an unfair bias against it. For, in proportion as its standard is admitted to be good, must the standard to which it gives place be considered to be better. But independently of such consideration, I have no desire to minimise whatever goodness, whether of thought or of practice, has appeared upon the earth apart from Christianity. Rather do I see in that goodness an outcome,—faint and feeble though it be,—of the same Divine power which was in Christ. I hold with St. Paul, that men were able to give worship to the one true God, even though their knowledge of Him was ignorance¹¹. And I believe with St. Peter that, at all times, and in all nations, a reverent spirit, following earnestly such light as it could see, received from God, Who respects not the per-

¹¹ Acts xvii. 23.

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sons of men, the high reward of Divine acceptance¹². To each time God assigns such forms of His grace as suit that time. But the Divine Gift is in all ages the same;—the same Spirit, the same Guide, the same Light.

Non-Christian philosophy and non-Christian theology both lent a much stronger support to morality than Christian writers are sometimes disposed to admit. The loving study of wisdom not only had a tendency to purify and enlighten, but in a measure it certainly did purify and enlighten the mind, and promote the practice of virtue. It is impossible to study the writings, and read the lives of many of the non-Christian philosophers, without feeling assured that it was their great aim to discover what constituted the perfection and happiness of man; and the vision must be very dull, or very oblique, which fails to trace in history a certain amount of practical good resulting from their influence. But the sum total of practical good was trifling. The older systems, based upon the needs of the state, could have little influence upon the heart of the individual, through which alone the whole lump of society can ever be leavened. Their teaching was not addressed to the multitude. The asceti-

¹² Acts x. 34, 35.

cism of Pythagoras was a secret revealed to only a handful of men bound together by a sort of free-masonry. The sublime conceptions of Plato were too speculative and visionary, and the intellectual triumphs of Aristotle too severe and unattractive, to exercise any general influence upon human conduct. Their teaching was utterly futile as a guide of life to common men.

Religion, too, before the introduction of Christianity, notwithstanding all the sin committed in its name, made a wholesome protest against much of the prevalent error and wickedness. Skilfully adapted to impress the popular imagination, the mysteries imparted to the initiated such religious and moral instruction as could not fail to have a good effect upon their conduct¹³. "Happy," says the poet, "is he who has his soul disciplined in the Bacchic rites by holy purifications, while he revels on the mountains¹⁴." Cicero regarded the mysteries as the beginning of a life of reason and virtue, giving men comfort here, and hope of happiness hereafter¹⁵. How profoundly these mysteries influenced the hearts of men may be gathered from a single incident. The emperor Valentinian orders the pro-consul of

¹³ See *Warburton*, *Div. Leg.*, bk. ii. sect. iv.

¹⁴ *Bacch.* 73.

¹⁵ *De Legibus*, ii. 14.

Greece to suppress their celebration. The proconsul replies that such a step must result in general commotion and disorder. The mysteries, he says, had now embraced the whole race of mankind. Should they be prohibited, the people would be plunged in dismay, and thenceforth lead a life not worth living. This reasoning was considered unanswerable, and the emperor withdrew his order¹⁶. In these mysteries were imparted, in the midst of significant rites, certain traditions which implied "at least a new life, if not absolute immortality for the human soul." But the solemnity of such instruction must have been greatly marred, if not wholly neutralized, by the coarse ribaldry and impure pantomime which in process of time became associated with it¹⁷.

Religion and philosophy were both of them defective. And instead of helping one another,

¹⁶ *Zosimus*, Hist. Novæ, lib. iv., quoted by *Warburton*, Div. Leg., bk. ii. sect. 4.

¹⁷ The learned and very impartial *Gieseler* says (Hist., vol. i. p. 24): "The mysteries were far from presenting a better esoteric religion than that of the people." *Plato* proposed to banish the Greek Mythology from his Republic, on account of its corrupting influence. *Seneca* (De Brevitate Vitæ, c. 16) did not scruple to charge it with being an incentive to vice. And *Aristotle* (Politic., vii. 8) thought many of the religious rites too immoral to be witnessed.

by each trying to supply that in which the other was lacking, their tendency was to become more and more antagonistic. The religionist refused to listen to the philosopher whom he called an atheist. The philosopher laughed at the religionist, accounting him a fool.

Give to pagan religion, and poetry, and philosophy all the credit they can claim as civilizing influences; collect into one beam all the scattered rays of light that can be found in their various and often contradictory teaching, and what have you? A light indeed; beautiful and useful; beautiful as the light of the moon in the dark sky; useful as that same pale orb to men walking in the night; but after all no more than a reflected light, which vanishes when the direct rays of the Sun of Righteousness shine on the paths of men.

When the night of heathenism was far spent, there appeared upon the earth One Who declared Himself to have been sent by the great Father of mankind, to do that Father's will in saving the lost world. In the midst of all the darkness, He declared Himself to be the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world¹⁸. In the midst of the moral lethargy, and doubt,

¹⁸ John i. 9.

and error, He announced Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life¹⁹. Nay, at the moment when He was face to face with an ignominious death, He affirmed that He had overcome the world²⁰. Yet, when it had seemed to be within His reach to become one of the great ones of the earth, withdrawing to the mountain solitude, He foiled the intention of those who would come and take Him by force to make Him a king²¹. Before His final departure from the earth He is reported to have said, "All power is given to Me in heaven and earth²²." Yet the men whom He sent forth to be His agents in exerting that power upon the earth, were not only persons such as the world at all times is apt to hold in light esteem, but such as seemed least likely to be able to influence those amongst whom they were sent. They were known as Galileans, and Greeks, and these very names were enough to make the polished Roman turn away from them; for the Eastern worships with which he was acquainted were, one and all, an insult to his superior refinement²³.

It was a thing to cause universal indignation

¹⁹ John xiv. 6.

²⁰ John xvi. 33.

²¹ John vi. 15.

²² Matt. xxviii. 18.

²³ *Bingham*, Eccl. Antiq. i. 2; *Juvenal*, Sat. iii. 60 sq.; *Merivale*, Romans under the Empire, vol. vi. c. 52.

and grief, that men of mean rank, without culture, without letters, should dare peremptorily to decide questions which, after centuries of deliberation, were still puzzling all the Schools of Philosophy. How could men who had not the power of understanding in worldly matters, be listened to as advisers in things Divine²⁴?

Then the avowed aim of the new teachers, to unite the whole world in one common faith, excited the contemptuous derision of the philosopher. The proposal to bring men of all nations and tongues into harmony and brotherhood of belief, seemed to them to be nothing less than a chimerical absurdity²⁵.

In the third place, the doctrine by which the Christians proposed to accomplish this end, brought upon them the imputation of Atheism. We are expressly told that the heathen regarded

²⁴ "Itaque indignandum omnibus, indolendum est, audere quosdam, et hoc studiorum rudes, litterarum profanos, expertes artium etiam sordidarum, certum aliquid de summâ rerum ac majestate decernere, de quâ tot omnibus sæculis sectarum plurimarum usque adhuc ipsa philosophia deliberat." *Minucius Felix*, Octavius, v. "Proinde siquid sapientiæ vobis aut verecundiæ est, desinite cœli plagas et mundi fata et secreta rimari. Satis est pro pedibus aspicere, maxime indoctis, impolitibus, rudibus, agrestibus: quibus non est datum intelligere civilia, multo magis denegatum est disserere divina." *Id.* xii.

²⁵ *Orig.*, c. Cels., viii.

them as hateful to the gods, because in daily prayer they worshipped as God, believing Him to be still alive, not the Omnipotent Deity, but a Child of man, Who had perished by such a death as added vileness to the vilest²⁶. So genuine was their belief in the impiety of the Christians, that to them, as exciting the anger of the gods, they attributed all their misfortunes. If the Tiber rose too high,—if the Nile did not rise high enough,—if there came an earthquake, a famine, or a plague,—the cry at once arose, “The Christians to the lion²⁷!”

The early Christians were mocked by the wise man, and despised and hated by the multitude. It seemed little likely that such men should ever exert much influence over mankind generally. But this handful of Jews, despised and persecuted men, the companions of One in Whom the world saw only an executed convict, in the face of the power of Rome, and of the civilization of Greece, announced themselves, in tones of such personal conviction as admitted of no discussion, to be the bearers of salvation to the world²⁸. Heedless of all devices of human wisdom for compassing such an end, they went about preaching that

²⁶ *Arnobius*, *Advers. Gent.*, i. c. 36.

²⁷ *Tertull.*, *Apologet.*, c. 40.

²⁸ *Acts* xiii. 47.

which was to some a stumbling-block, and to others foolishness, but which has from that day to this been declared by millions to be nothing less than the power of God.

To save the world,—to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit in mankind:—this was a change, which from its very nature could not be other than slowly progressive. If the Gospel had been no more than a collection of liturgical directions, if the Christian life had consisted merely in the performance of certain acts of worship, if the Faith had been no more than dogma which might be summed up in a few terse and trenchant watchwords, and if it had consisted only of two or three doctrines which might be formulated and learned like so many definitions,—then Christianity, like any of the Eastern cults so readily received at Rome, might have attained an early maturity. But the Planter of Christianity, the Same Who claimed to have given it its nature and its life, declared that its growth should follow certain laws. He put Himself forth as no magician, astonishing with a phantom growth. He claimed to have planted a seed of Divine life in human hearts. The least of all seeds it might seem, but it was destined to become a great tree; no Jonah's gourd coming up in a night,

and perishing in a night ; but slowly growing till it should become greater than all herbs, and send forth great branches²⁹. It is a childish folly that expects the buried seed to put forth shoots, and to bear its fruit, the same day that it is planted. It is while men sleep, and rise night and day, that the seed springs and grows up, they know not how. Even so, it is with an unobserved growth that Christianity increases. Much that was amiss took place under the eye of Jesus and His apostles, which nevertheless they did not directly oppose. It was no want of concern which made them silent. They were silent because, as yet, man had no ears to hear ; his distempered will must be healed, his prejudices uprooted, his desires purified and elevated by the insensible action of ages, before he could apply the Divine message to his life and conduct.

If we would fairly judge what Christianity has done in the world, we must make a broader survey than that which confines itself within the limits of our own age. That narrow view may disclose to us little but the success of evil around us, both yesterday and to-day ; but if we lift up our eyes to examine the whole landscape of the world's history for two thousand years, we cannot fail to

²⁹ Matt. xiii. 32.

mark the conquering advance of Christianity. Every newspaper we take up reminds us forcibly, how little it has accomplished, compared with what might have been expected, if man, rightly understanding, and honestly practising its precepts, had imbibed its peaceful spirit with the guileless docility of a little child. Nevertheless a little examination will suffice to shew, that, in spite of all the ignorance, bigotry, prejudice, and passion, that have so painfully retarded its progress, Christian influence has been making its way among men. It shews itself to possess a certain Divine power, which, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, is ever subduing resistance, and little by little, transforming the world into the image of Christ.

Beginning with the individual, Christianity teaches men to direct all their conduct in obedience to the will of God. With emphatic earnestness, in the early days of His ministry, Christ taught His followers to regard themselves as the salt of the earth, as the light of the world³⁰. To be of any value, the salt must retain its saltiness, the light must be set on a candlestick. Christians must not do good to be seen of men, yet must they be seen to do good³¹. Unlike the

³⁰ Matt. v. 13, 14.

³¹ Bp. Wordsworth, *ad loc.*

teaching of philosophy, which so often failed to influence the conduct of the cultured³², these precepts of Christ grew into practice in the lives of His first humble disciples.

The manner in which Christianity spread itself over the earth in the early ages is very remarkable. We find unexpected mention of its presence in countries to which, so far as we know, no formal mission had been sent. The first time St. Paul went to Italy, he found Christians there before him, not only brethren from Rome, but brethren from Puteoli³³; and modern discoveries at Pompei bear witness to the presence of Christians a few years later at the other side of the Bay of Naples³⁴.

During the interval of about three years which elapsed between the apostle's first and second

³² The extent to which philosophy was able to improve the lives even of its professors may be gathered from a letter of *Seneca*. He despairs of being able to make a convert of a wit, Marcellinus, because, he says, "he will point to one philosopher after another, and throw their evil lives in my teeth." Epist. xxix. Seneca himself justifies occasional drunkenness ("Nonnunquam et usque ad ebrietatem veniendum"), appealing to the example of Solon, Arcesilaus, and Cato. *De Tranquillitate Animi*, xv. And *Diogenes Laertius* tells us (in *Vitâ Arcesilai*) that not only the Academic School, but even Zeno used to defend excessive indulgence in wine.

³³ Acts xxviii. 13, 14.

³⁴ E. g. the curious inscription "Igni gaude Christiane."

visits to Rome, the increase in the number of converts to Christianity had been such as to cause considerable alarm to the empire; and the man, who on the first occasion was treated as a person of no importance, was, at his second appearance, put to death as a dangerous leader of a too-rapidly increasing sect. The diffusion of Christianity was not due to the direct influence of missionary labour alone³⁵. In society it was a force which made itself felt; everywhere it excited attention and provoked discussion. The fact that the Christians kept themselves much apart from heathen observances, their very peculiarities of habit and demeanour, were so many challenges to public curiosity. Whether they would or not, the heathen world could not fail to be impressed by innovations, which, as they became more widely adopted, interfered more and more with their occupations and amusements, their habits and their laws. The merest trifles often led to warm discussions concerning the new faith; discussion to inquiry; inquiry to acceptance. For instance: A gifted student of Plato betakes himself to a retired spot near the sea-coast, that he may be the less interrupted in his studies. An incidental inquiry

³⁵ See *Blunt*, *The Right Use of the Early Fathers*, p. 231.

leads him into conversation with an old man whom he chances to meet, and as they talk his attention is drawn to the Gospel of Christ. They part; and the student sees the old man no more. But what he had said proved to be a Divine seed cast upon good ground; for it was instrumental in turning Justin, the pagan philosopher, into Justin, the Martyr of Jesus.

Again: A Roman lawyer, Minucius Felix, tells us how, fagged and worn by professional labour, he avails himself of a short vacation to visit Ostia, for the sake of rest and sea-bathing. Two friends accompany him, the one a Christian, the other a pagan. As the three walk together, the pagan gives the customary salutation to an image of Serapis which they happen to pass. In the quiet spirit of friendship the Christian remarks upon the delusion underlying such an act. The pagan resents the speech as a reproach to his understanding, and proposes to defend the practice on philosophic grounds. Then and there, upon the sea-beach, ensues a discussion, which results in the conversion of the pagan to Christianity.

Such stirrings of the passing breeze sufficed to cast the seed of the Gospel upon new ground; such trivial movements among the grains com-

posing the social lump facilitated the working of the mighty leaven.

Silently winning its way, it first attained the mastery of a few individuals. From these, as from so many centres, it spread outwards, ever enlarging the borders of its dominion. But the spread of that dominion was not due to conquest; it was a gradual development, following the laws which govern the nature of man. Persecuted before it was dominant, dominant before it was universal, master of souls before it was master of institutions,—it was not until it had won the hearts of men that Christianity mounted the throne³⁶. Thenceforth the political relations of the old and new religions were changed; thenceforth the state made preparations for its divorce from polytheism, and its union with Christianity. But the separation was by no means carried out immediately. To say nothing of the restoration of the old religious principle by Julian, paganism, worsted but not destroyed, defended itself for a long time still, in the laws, the habits, and the prejudices, of a society which it had made its own. In the same year Constantine published two edicts, one of which recommended the solemn

³⁶ *Troplong*, *De L'Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit Civil des Romains*, p. 5.

observance of Sunday, while the other ordained the consultation of oracles. The senate still continued to invoke the favour of the old gods upon its deliberations; and it was well-nigh a hundred years later, when the struggle, coming to an issue in the encounter between Symmachus the pagan pontiff, and Ambrose the Christian bishop, the rupture between the state and the olden worship was complete.

It remains to consider in future chapters the slow but steady process, by which Christianity extended the limits of its dominion. And, if the effect of our inquiry be to shew, that among the many influences which have left their impress upon our laws, our customs, and our modes of thought, none has set upon them a mark so general or so deep, as that which they have received, either directly or indirectly, from Christianity; if, in spite of checks and hindrances from without, in spite of large adulteration, the spirit of Christ nevertheless be found to have wrought itself into all the relations of society; if it appear that the teaching of Christ has had energy, and still possesses energy, to diffuse its kindly influence over all the practical interests that concern mankind; —then, to try to abolish that teaching, because it seems to contain some things which we do not

like, is, to use an illustration attributed to one who cannot be charged with undue partiality, no wiser than it would be to burn a ship, in order to be rid of suspected vermin ³⁷.

It is only when we view the condition of nations which have never known Christianity, that we become sensible, how much of the light that penetrates the darkness of our own moral, social, and political life, is due to its blessed influence; only then, that we come to understand how its extinction would be, not only to those who dwell under the direct influence of its rays, but also for the millions beyond the horizon who enjoy but the glimmer of its twilight, nothing less than a blotting-out of the sun from heaven.

³⁷ Professor *Huxley*, *Contemporary Review*, vol. xvi. p. 12.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO MORALS.

BEFORE men can do right, they must know what is right to be done. Where, before Christianity, are we to look for the standard of morals? To the poets? They were full of the libertine doctrine, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die¹." To the lawgiver? The philosopher charges him with giving legislative sanction to injustice². To the philosopher? Utilitarianism of the grossest form is a common doctrine of philosophy³. Advantage or disadvantage alone is the measure of right and wrong⁴. Under certain circumstances falsehood is laudable⁵. In the nature of theft, adultery, or sacrilege, there is nothing base⁶. To take vengeance is more

¹ *Horace*, *Carm.* i. 7. 30; ii. 3. 13 sq.

² *Plutarch*, in *Lycurg.*

³ *Döllinger*, *Heidenthum und Judenthum*, 276 sq.

⁴ *Plato* approves the old doctrine that what is profitable is honourable, and what is hurtful is base. *Repub.* lib. v.

⁵ *Plato*, *Repub.*, lib. ii., iii., v.

⁶ *Diog. Laert.*, lib. ii. 99.

noble than to forgive⁷. The exposure of helpless infants is a thing prescribed⁸.

Can religion supply what is lacking in poetry, legislation, and philosophy, and give us the rule of a virtuous life? Read Strabo's account of the establishment belonging to the Temple of Venus at Corinth⁹; or make yourself acquainted with the character of pagan worship generally, from the pages of Eusebius or Minucius Felix¹⁰,

⁷ *Arist.*, Nicomach., iv. 5.

⁸ *Plato*, Republic, lib. v.; *Aristotle*, Polit., xiv. 10; *Seneca*, De Irâ, lib. i. c. 15. *Plutarch* (De Amore Proles) speaks of the exposure of infants as a very common practice. The highest type of pre-Christian benevolence, the utterer of the famous—

"Homo sum: humani nihil a me alienum puto," commands his wife to expose her infant daughter. And when he afterwards discovers that the child has survived, in consequence of her having committed the hard task to another, he bursts into a torrent of rage against her,—

"Si meum

Imperium exsequi voluisses, interemptam oportuit;

Non simulare mortem verbis, re ipsâ spem vitæ dare."

Some allowance he is willing to make for the natural feelings of a mother's heart, but he cannot forgive her headstrong, improvident folly in giving way to them. *Terence*, Heautontimorumenos, Act. i. Sc. 1. 25; Act. iii. Sc. 4. 17-30. See also *Andria*, Act. iv. Sc. 5; *Apuleius*, De Asino Aureo, lib. x; *Plautus*, Cistellaria, Act. i. Sc. 3. 18.

⁹ *Strabo*, ed. Casaubon, p. 272.

¹⁰ *Euseb.*, Præparatio Evangelica, lib. ii. c. 6; *Min. Felix*, Octavius. To judge from *Seneca's* description of them (*Contra Superstitiones*, a lost treatise, quoted by *Augustine*, De Civ. Dei,

and you will feel inclined to say, with St. Paul, of the men who did such things, that "God gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts¹¹."

There is another side of the picture it is true, which is by no means so dark. The sacred flame of moral truth was never utterly extinguished, even in the thickest night of heathenism. On the practice of virtue much was truly conceived and beautifully said. In the very words written by heathen men, it would not be difficult for a Christian to construct a noble code of practical ethics¹². But it would be a great mistake to suppose that, independently of Christianity, men had such a code to direct their conduct.

It is in vain that we seek for it in pagan religion. The belief in gods, which are merely the creation of the human mind¹³, can never sup-

lib. vi. 10), it would be difficult to imagine anything more unedifying than the religious rites of the Capitol. See also *Maury*, *Relig. de la Grèce*, t. iii. p. 171.

¹¹ Rom. i. 24.

¹² Indeed there are many remarkable parallels between the teaching of Jesus and the utterances of the noblest non-Christian teachers. But Bishop *Lightfoot* has well shewn (in his *Dissertation*, St. Paul and Seneca), that, in the mouth of the heathen, the words fell infinitely short of the meaning which Christianity imported into them.

¹³ "Quid aliud est vitia nostra incendere, quam auctores illis

ply an independent standard for measuring the morality of human conduct. A religion which is only the produce of national character, and reflects the vices as well as the virtues of that character, cannot avoid adapting itself to the impulses of men, and so warping the standard to suit the people's bent.

Nor could philosophy make good the defect of religion in this respect. Each new teacher, as he rose to eminence, had some change to make in the doctrine of his predecessors. When the teachers of duty contradicted one another, how were the learners to know what duty was? They found no fixed certainty on which the mind could stay itself; and we are expressly told that they spent their lives in continued wavering and suspense¹⁴.

But supposing man to know his duty,—this, by itself, is not enough. The right way is not always inviting at first glance. Men will not enter upon it unless drawn by some attraction more powerful than any that can be found in the contemplation of mere duty. If once

inscribere deos, et dare morbo, exemplo divinitatis, excusatam licentiam?" *Seneca*, *De Brevitate Vitæ*, c. 16; cf. *De Vitâ Beatâ*, c. 26; *Cicero*, *Tusc. Disp.*, lib. i. c. 26.

¹⁴ *Diod. Sic.*, quoted by *Gregory*, *Letters*, p. 33.

induced to try it, they find that it is not easy. It is exhausting, and demands a large supply of moral energy. And at intervals the road proves so painful and so dark, that the wayfarer is tempted to sink down helpless, in a lethargy of despair.

Apart from Christianity, where is the requisite impulse to start man in the way of right? Where the stimulus to keep alive his flagging zeal? To a certain extent, philosophy can influence conduct. Convince the enlightened man that his tenets are contrary to truth, and he will reject them. Satisfy him that his practice is absurd, and he will give it up. But the history of every age and of every land makes it clear, that only very few men are such philosophers¹⁵. Upon the conduct of the mass of mankind,—including those who possess a degree of culture which is never likely to become universal,—mere speculative teaching exercises very little influence. For what is the highest motive which any non-Christian philosophy has ever supplied,

¹⁵ *Voltaire* speaks thus in testimony of the superiority of Christianity over philosophy: "Stoicism produced but one Epictetus; and Christianity forms thousands of such philosophers, who know not that they are so, and who carry their virtue to such a length as to be ignorant that they possess any." *Correspondence Gen.*, iii. 222.

or ever can supply, to make men good? It is not in its power to furnish any higher motive to the practice of virtue, than that approbation of our minds which follows well-doing. This is no inconsiderable incentive to the man who is bent on doing what he feels to be right; and such a man, no doubt, was able to find, in heathen morals, not a little both to encourage and to help. But this approbation is practically no incentive whatever to those who are strangers to well-doing; so that, as a remedy against evil-doing, non-Christian philosophy is found wanting, just at the point where its aid is most imperatively required¹⁶. So well indeed was this understood by the heathen themselves, that many, who regarded the whole system of popular theology as utterly false, nevertheless wished it to be upheld by all means, as being useful, nay, even necessary, to the maintenance of social order. They felt that alike in personal, social, and international relations, religion was the great support of morality. If men were to be withheld from vice and urged to virtue, they must have the fear of heaven before their eyes¹⁷.

¹⁶ See Remains of *Alexander Knox*, London, 1837, vol. iii. p. 374.

¹⁷ Though declaring himself a proficient in philosophy run mad, and a niggard and unfrequent worshipper (*Carm. lib. i.*

But, after all, what practical effect had the fear of punishment, or the hope of reward, in a life to come, upon the conduct of men during the life that now is? We read of one or two emi-

xxxiv. 1), *Horace* does not hesitate to attribute the calamities of the empire to its neglect of the national gods (*Carm. lib. iii. 6*). *Plato* declares that whoever overthrows religion overthrows the foundations of all human society. *De Leg. x.* The learned Pontifex *Scævola*, an older contemporary of *Cicero*; *Cicero* (*De Legibus, ii.*; *De Nat. Deor. i. 1*); *Varro* and *Seneca* (quoted by *Augustine, De Civ. Dei, vi. c. 10*); and *Strabo* (*Geograph. i. c. 2*), all recognise the falseness and baseness of the popular mythology; and all deem it necessary to uphold it nevertheless. For the general prevalence of the belief that religion is necessary to the well-being of society, see *Warburton, Div. Leg., vol. i. bk. ii. sect. 1.* The belief is not confined to the ancients. *Hume* recognizes the fact that a general adoption of atheism would lead to the annihilation of all civility, arts, learning, virtue, and refinement; a people entirely destitute of faith being, in his opinion, but a few degrees removed above the brutes. *Nat. Hist. of Relig., sect. 15.* *Machiavelli* calls those "infamous and detestable" who would overthrow religion; *Discorsi, lib. i.* *Voltaire* says, "Si le monde était gouverné par des athées, il vaudrait autant être sous l'empire immédiat de ces êtres infernaux, qu'on nous peint acharnés contre leurs victimes." *Homélie sur l'Athéisme.* "Par les principes la philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la religion ne le fasse encore mieux; et la religion en fait beaucoup, que la philosophie ne saurait faire." *Rousseau, Emile, tom. iii. p. 300.* "Je n'entends pas que l'on puisse être vertueux sans religion. J'eus longtemps cette opinion trompeuse, dont je suis bien désabusé." *Rousseau, Lettre sur les Spectacles.* See also *Lord Herbert* (*Leland's Deistical Writers*); *Bayle* (*Dictionnaire Critique, Art. Brutus*); and *Lord Bolingbroke* (*vol. v. 322*); *Diderot, Correspondence of*

nent men, who, believing in the immortality of the soul, found in that belief a strong incentive to the practice of virtue¹⁸. But as early as Plato's day such doctrines had little credit among men, and Socrates himself witnesses to the common belief that the soul was blown away, and perished with the body¹⁹. The poets also occasionally introduced the idea of rewards and punishments into their machinery. But much more frequently they made death the end of all things. Their teaching was, that when the iron sleep oppresses, the eyes are closed for an everlasting night, and men sleep the sleep that knows no waking²⁰.

Some of the philosophers reasoned much and beautifully upon the immortality of the soul. But so far were they from convincing others, that they failed to remove doubt from their own minds²¹.

Grimm and Diderot, vol. i. 492. *Johnson's* verdict on the opinion of Plutarch that Atheism is more tolerable than idolatry is worth quoting:—"A man may live in a corrupted atmosphere, but he must die in an exhausted receiver." *Boswell's* Life of Johnson.

¹⁸ E. g., Scipio and Cato. *Cicero*, Som. Scip.; De Senect. xxiii. 82.

¹⁹ *Plato*, Phædo, 77 B. (pag. H. Stephens).

²⁰ *Moschus*, Idyll. iii. 107; *Catullus*, Carm. v. 6; *Virgil*, *Æn.* x. 745; *Horace*, Carm. lib. iv. 17; *Persius*, Sat. v. 152; *Lucretius*, lib. iii. 10.

²¹ *Plato*, Phædo, 53 A; Phædrus, 48 B, C; 84 F; Apolog. sub fin.; *Aristotle*, Eth. Nicom. lib. iii. c. 9; iv. c. 11; *Cicero*, Tusc. Disp. i. 11, 15, 16, 20.

As the sum of all his speculations, Socrates could only venture to teach, that, upon the whole, there was good ground to hope that ancient tradition might prove to be more than a baseless fiction; and should that be so, then the generality of men who led good and virtuous lives in this world, might not unreasonably expect to pass at death into the bodies of bees and of ants.

Notwithstanding all his arguments for the immortality of the soul, Cicero too seems to have entertained serious doubts whether death did not bring with it absolute insensibility²². In any case the doctrine was to him an abstract speculation, barren of all practical moral value. I do not remember that he ever uses it for the purpose of stimulating men to the practice of virtue. But, whatever we may believe the opinion of a few individuals to have been, there is overwhelming evidence to shew, that, before the Christian era, the fear of Divine punishment after death was wholly inoperative in deterring the multitude from

²² "Ut hoc saltem in maximis malis boni consequamur, ut mortem, quam etiam beati contemnere debeamus, propterea quod nullum sensum esset habitura, nunc, sic affecti, non modo contemnere debeamus, sed etiam optare." Epist. ad Divers. v. 21. Cf. what *Pliny* says:—"Omnibus a supremo die eadem, quæ ante primum: nec magis a morte sensus ullus aut corpori aut animæ, quam ante natalem." Hist. Nat. vii. c. 56; *Laert.*, Vita Epic.

wickedness. A keen observer of men describes the age of Augustus as leaving no crime untouched. The fear of the gods had lost all power to restrain the impious hand that spared no altar²³.

Had heathenism been able to put into men's hands a worthy standard of conduct, and had it been able to make them feel the importance of living up to this standard,—this indeed would have been much. But more,—very much more,—was needful.

In spite of all that has been written to shew that right and wrong are words without meaning, except as they refer to the tendency of actions to promote or hinder the general good, there is no doubt that man approves and disapproves of conduct on wholly other grounds. Within him dwells an imperious monitor, obliging him to refer his conduct to a standard which is without him. When he is dissatisfied with his own ill-doings, it is not because of their probable effect on his fellows, but because he feels them to be contrary to that standard. In other words, he is conscious of sin; he knows the will that is in him to be opposed to what he perceives to be the will of God.

Man's own heart makes him feel the need of

²³ *Hor.*, *Carm.* i. 35 sq.

an expiation for sin. If there be indeed a God Supreme, He must be pleased with virtue and displeased with vice. Men are not virtuous, therefore they must be living under the displeasure of the Deity. The vengeance of heaven is ever present to their minds. But can heaven be merciful as well as just? They would fain hope so, but they know not. All ages, all nations, all religions, bear witness, more or less clear, to this. We find Greeks and Romans,—men of China and men of India,—all supplicating heaven for pardon; ever increasing the number of their deities, and adding to the burden of religious observance. Nay, so powerful and so general is the sense of guilt, as to have made man forget the natural affection of kindred. In order to expiate the sin of his soul, he has sacrificed with rites of hideous cruelty the fruit of his body²⁴. The thoughtful Greek,—the practical Roman,—the rude Gaul,—the semi-barbarous, though not unrefined, Mexican, have all felt an atonement to be so necessary for sin, that, in their anxious longing to obtain it, they have not hesitated to offer, as the most precious of victims, their fellow-men²⁵. But temples and

²⁴ Micah vi. 7.

²⁵ "Non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari

altars, supplications and sacrifices were multiplied in vain. The endless mysteries and cults only served to declare the presence of unrest which they could not dispel. Conscious of guilt that it knew not how to expiate, the world was oppressed by the burden of a ceaseless dread²⁶,—was an utter stranger to the blessing of being quiet from the fear of evil²⁷.

In presence of this phase of the disease, for which polytheism vainly prescribed its strongest remedies, philosophy did not hesitate to own itself at fault. "Would that I could find truth as easily as I can expose falsehood²⁸," exclaims Cicero; while Plato longs for what he feels to be indispensable, the coming of a more than human deliverer²⁹. The moral teaching, noblest in conception, and most effective in action, which has ever appeared outside Christianity, arbitrantur." *Cæsar*, *De Bello Gallico*, vi. 16. *Prescott* believes that according to the lowest estimate some thousands of human beings were yearly offered up on the altars of the Mexican divinities; *Conquest of Mexico*, bk. i. chap. iii; and appendix, pt. ii. See also *Robertson*, *History of America*, bk. v.

²⁶ "Te duce, si qua manent, sceleris vestigia nostri
Irrita perpetuâ solvent formidine terras."

Virgil, *Ecl.* iv. 13.

²⁷ *Prov.* i. 33.

²⁸ *De Nat. Deor.* ii. 3.

²⁹ Alcibiades, ii; *De Legibus*, lib. iv; cf. *Seneca*, *Epist.* lii.: "Nemo per se satis valet, ut emergat; oportet manum aliquis porrigat, aliquis educat."

has been no more than an empirical remedy. In error from the beginning, it starts from a wrong diagnosis, mistaking what is in fact only a symptom, for the disease itself. It starts, not from sin, but from suffering. In place of co-operating with nature, its treatment is repressive; and though it may bring partial relief to the symptoms, it leaves the seat of the disease untouched³⁰.

Before Christianity, there were in the world conceptions of right and wrong higher and nobler than has often been supposed; but they failed to supply mankind with a practicable standard of duty. There were also inducements to the discharge of duty,—inducements strong and pure. But they failed utterly to touch the ignorant and the erring. The sinner was left in his sin. And for the man, who, tied and bound by the chains of a sinful nature and sinful habits, saw the right, and longed to do the right, but felt himself all powerless for the task,—for such a man no help was found.

It needs but a glance at the practices of so-

³⁰ History gives us no ground for supposing that pre-Christian philosophy could ever have developed a perfect morality. See *Hermann*, *Kulturgeschichte der Griechen und der Römer*, ii. 188 sq.

ciety to shew how little both religion and philosophy availed to promote among the generality of men "a godly, righteous, and sober life." On all sides we find men calling evil good, and good evil, putting darkness for light and light for darkness. And it is unfortunately altogether impossible to regard such moral perversion as being confined to a few individuals, or even to a degraded class of society. The practice of sins, which the Christian shrinks from naming, involved no social degradation. The moral taste of the people was utterly vitiated and depraved. As we contemplate the picture which heathen writers themselves have given us of the state of society,—when we see the vilest passions idolized, the grossest vices incorporated into religious worship, and sins, of which it is a shame even to speak, taking up their foul abode in the very temples of the gods³¹,—we feel that there is no exaggeration in the language of St. Paul, which describes the pagan world as "working all uncleanness with greediness³²." The disease was too inveterate to yield to any treatment which heathen philosophy or heathen religion could apply. Both one and other put forth all their strength, exerted all the intellectual and

³¹ *Propertius*, Eleg., lib. ii. xix. 10. ³² Eph. iv. 19.

all the moral energy they could command; and nevertheless they failed to regenerate society. It was beyond their power to make men cease to do evil, and learn to do well.

But what the highest wisdom of the heathen could not do, what the best teaching of their mysteries could not effect, was accomplished by the Gospel of Jesus, working with power in the hands of unlettered men. And why? Because Christ gave to the world what, without Him, it had lacked.

In the first place, He gave to it a standard of duty, authoritative, unbending, and easily applied:—authoritative, because it was the word of the Almighty God: unbending, because with Him is no variableness neither shadow of turning: easily applied, because it was contained in the two brief and simple commandments, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbour as thyself³³.” True obedience to these two commandments meant nothing less than the perfection of holy living; for, in obeying them, men deny ungodliness and worldly lust; and live, soberly,—holding the mastery over themselves; righteously,—giving to all their due; and godly,—with well-directed reverence³⁴.

³³ Matt. xxii. 37, 39.

³⁴ Tit. ii. 12.

But how does Christianity induce men to adopt this standard of duty? In order to affect the life of men, you must touch their interests, (and make them know that you do so), stir their feelings, or win their affections. And this no cold reasoning can ever do. All other systems of philosophy, except the Christian, are wanting in that particular kind of attractiveness without which it is not to be expected that they could influence mankind. Such motives as are necessary to induce us to enter upon the path of duty, and to persevere in it,—attractiveness, encouragement, support,—can be supplied by no system of philosophy which busies itself exclusively with the stern requirements of abstract morality. If we seek to trace the influences, other than religious, which have operated in moulding our characters for good, we shall find, that, in the great crises of our lives, no consideration of what wisdom directs or justice demands, has been nearly so helpful to us as our conscious relationship to some wise and good and loving friend. And it is just this sort of motive, only immeasurably more powerful, with which Christianity supplies us. It teaches us that all we see of true, of noble, or of lovely in the characters of those who have most won our affections and improved our hearts, is no more than the reflected

beam of a broken light issuing from our loving Father, Who is the great source of all that is true and noble and lovely. Who that realizes such perfection of goodness, embodied in the person of One Who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, can remain uninfluenced by it? Who that is conscious of being loved by God with such deep and tender love as Christianity exhibits, can fail to love God in return, and to let his love be seen, not only in loving acts to his fellow-men, because they are God's creatures, but also in the loving surrender of his own will to the will of Him Whom he loves.

It is however only too true, that in many cases more is requisite to keep men in the path of virtue than any exhibition of its loveliness. There are characters which refuse to be influenced except by the incentive of other motives. Such motives Christianity supplies, and supplies in a form which the lowest intelligence that belongs to an accountable being has no difficulty in understanding, sufficiently at least to influence his conduct. For it reveals an all-seeing God, Who, loving virtue and hating vice, will judge all men according to their deeds, whether they be good or bad. How can the man who realizes that he must one day appear before the tribunal of a Judge to whom his heart,

with all its secrets, is open, allow that heart to become callous and indifferent to the fact, much less to give itself up to impenitent indulgence in some darling sin? When men live as under the eye of a heart-searching God, Who, seeing in secret, will one day openly reward, the stream of their life becomes purified at the very fountain.

Thus Christianity supplies new motives to the practice of virtue. Does it also shew itself to possess that which non-Christianity lacks,—the power to engender in the hearts of men the virtues it demands of them? Can it remove the burden of conscious guilt? Can it release the sinner from the terror of sin, and can it strengthen him to lead a new life?

Jesus claims to do all this. His name was given to Him because He came to save His people from their sins. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. He addressed Himself not to those who thought themselves righteous, but to those who knew themselves to be sinners. His promises are all, and more than all, that the fainting frailty of the sin-burdened heart could desire. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is

passed from death unto life³⁵." "This is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day³⁶."

Words such as these were a new thing in the world. As new was the effect produced in those who received them. They had power to fill men's hearts with the conviction, that the death of Christ had availed to win for them forgiveness of those trespasses which had been so heavy a load to their consciences. Dead though they had been in those sins, they felt themselves to be quickened into a new life together with Christ³⁷. To despair and perplexity, Christianity offered unexpected consolations; even to the most guilty it opened a prospect of pardon. The pagans said of it in mockery, "Other religions admit to their rites men of pure conscience; the Christians offer the Kingdom of God to sinners and madmen, that is, to the accursed." "Only sinners become Christians," was the mocking sneer of Celsus. "Yes, because only Christ can turn sinners into saints," triumphantly replied the early Church³⁸.

Thus we have seen that Christianity succeeded in giving men a worthy rule of life; in surround-

³⁵ John v. 24.

³⁷ Col. ii. 13, 14; Eph. ii. 5.

³⁶ John vi. 40.

³⁸ *Orig.*, c. Cels. iii. 59.

ing it with inducements sufficiently strong; and in replacing human weakness by a Divine strength,—all this, by no external application of unreasoning compulsion, but by the natural growth of living principles. It was not like the influence of fashion, which, working from above downwards, is so strangely irresistible, but changeful as the veering wind, leaves no permanent results. What is of absorbing interest to one generation is forgotten by the next, to become matter of antiquarian curiosity with the third. Not so the effects of Christian principles. They are the result of a power that was at first unobserved; that, beginning with the poor and the despised, silently but surely wrought its way upwards, from the manger to the throne. The leaven of Christianity does not work upon society, until after it has been hidden in the heart of the individual. But once hidden there, Christianity evokes affections, and directs their action: implants principles, and cultivates their growth. And these principles and affections make their presence felt through all the countless bonds which hold together the framework of society. It was not by violence that it sought to change the world. It did not aim at the overthrow of established authority³⁹. On the

³⁹ Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

contrary, it taught that the ruler, being appointed as a minister to men for good, is to be obeyed for conscience sake. There was much, it is true, in the state of society which was directly opposed to Christianity. But Christianity was content to sow the seeds of practical duty, and to wait in patience; for time would bring, as the fruit of those seeds, the prevalence of such an altered sense of duty as must repeal the unjust law, purify the public administration of justice, and reform the manners of men. No kingdom of this world, Christianity did not attempt to vindicate with the strong arm the rights of the weak and the oppressed. It did not sanction the rebellion of the child against the parent, or of the wife against her husband. It did not incite the slave to rebel against his master. Rather, as the servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, he was to be obedient to his master according to the flesh, with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men ⁴⁰. It simply said to men, Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus—all to the glory of God ⁴¹. If masters, be forbearing and just ⁴²; if parents, provoke not your children, but bring them up in the

⁴⁰ Eph. vi. 5, 7.

⁴¹ Col. iii. 17; 1 Cor. x. 31.

⁴² Eph. vi. 9.

nurture and admonition of the Lord ⁴³; if husbands, every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself ⁴⁴. No wall of partition any longer divides man from man ⁴⁵; no difference of sex or of race ⁴⁶, no accident of social status or of personal culture separates them now ⁴⁷; all are members of the same family, nay, all are brethren, inasmuch as all are children of God, their Father in heaven ⁴⁸.

The men who first imbibed these principles belonged to the lowest ranks of society, to the class of which criminals are made. Yet it was barely 200 years, before the Christians could proudly challenge their opponents to point out any one of their number who had been convicted of the gross offences which usually filled the prisons ⁴⁹. Even earlier than this the conduct of the Christians had not escaped the notice of the observant Galen, who attributes it directly to the teaching of Christ. In fearlessness of death, in chastity, in self-restraint, in earnest pursuit of goodness, he pronounced the conduct which the

⁴³ Eph. vi. 4.

⁴⁴ Eph. v. 33.

⁴⁵ Eph. ii. 14.

⁴⁶ Rom. x. 12.

⁴⁷ Rom. i. 14; Col. iii. 11.

⁴⁸ Gal. iii. 26.

⁴⁹ "Denique de vestro numero carcer exæstuat, Christianus ibi nullus, nisi aut reus suæ religionis, aut profugus." *Min. Felix. Octavius*, c. 35.

52 CHRISTIANITY JUDGED BY ITS FRUITS.

teaching of Jesus produced in unlettered men and women to be worthy of true philosophers⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ *Galen* (cir. A.D. 160), quoted by *Gieseler*, *Eccl. Hist.* vol. i. p. 126, Edinburgh, 1854. The passage is so remarkable that it deserves to be quoted at length:—"Hominum plerique orationem demonstrativam continuam mente assequi nequeunt, quare indigent, ut instituantur parabolis. Veluti nostro tempore videmus, homines illos, qui Christiani vocantur, fidem suam e parabolis petiisse. Hi tamen interdum talia faciunt, qualia qui vere philosophantur. Nam quod mortem contemnunt, id quidem omnes ante oculos habemus; item quod verecundiâ quâdam ducti ab usu rerum venerearum abhorrent. Sunt enim inter eos et feminæ et viri, qui per totam vitam a concubitu abstinuerint; sunt etiam, qui in animis regendis coercendisque, et in acerrimo honestatis studio eo progressi sunt, ut nihil cedant vere philosophantibus." Julian also, in his efforts to reform heathenism, is forced to point to the Christians as a model to the heathen. *H. Adrien Naville*, *Julien l'Apostat*, p. 163.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO HAPPINESS.

THE heart of man longs for enjoyment. Whatever be their country or their calling, their age, fortune, or natural bent, the lives of all men bear witness to the fact that happiness is an object of human desire. And there are not wanting indications to shew that this natural desire is destined to find fulfilment. If an infant cry, we at once inquire the cause; but if it appear contented and happy, we take no notice of the fact; so instinctively do we feel it natural to rejoice, when no cause of pain is present. Even in maturer years, when the sins and cares of life have dispelled the happiness of innocence, many have experienced rare and precious moments of peace around them, and peace within them,—moments when no malady oppresses their animal spirits, no cares distract their thoughts, and no sense of sin disturbs the calm of their hearts; when the stream of life, meeting no obstacle to bar its progress, no

clouds and storm to trouble and to darken its course, seems to glide along in unspeakable content. At such moments, is it not the very acme of folly to inquire whether life be worth living? for, at such moments, life itself,—to live, merely to be conscious of our existence,—is happiness.

Man then enters upon life under the dominion of an impulse which makes him seek for happiness, and with the feeling that he is made for happiness. What does he find? Pleasures indeed, but pleasures intermingled with pains; and, if life is to be regarded as beginning with the cradle and ending with the grave, with pains which greatly outweigh the pleasures; for the joys of earth disappoint, its troubles oppress, and death brings to an end whatever seemed good under the sun.

It will aid us to form a just estimate of the influence exerted by Christianity upon mankind with regard to each of these three points,—enjoyment, suffering, and death,—to call to mind the views which prevailed before its appearance¹.

Three centuries before Christ, Epicurus professed to teach the secret of a happy life. Observing

¹ What follows is more fully set out by Professor *Ernest Naville*, in his excellent book, *Le Christ*, Genève, A. Cherbuliez et Cie., 1878, pp. 76 sq. This volume is well worth reading.

that every excess in bodily pleasure entailed a more than counterbalancing pain, and seeing too that men were prone to excess, he prescribed to all who would enjoy life, the exercise of moderation, nay, in a certain measure, even of abstinence in pleasure. There is no one who may not find much well worth learning in his philosophy. Its aim is to give man the maximum of happiness. But for this happiness how much must he pay?

"In order to be spared the greatest possible amount of suffering and of care, it is necessary," he taught, "to keep aloof from almost all that interests mankind. A father experiences delights which are unknown to him who is not a father. But what anxieties has he as well? The pleasures of fatherhood are not worth what they cost.

"Ambition has its pleasures. But what cares and disappointments too! It is unspeakably better to rest confined within the limits of mediocrity, and to remain hidden in unobserved enjoyment. . . . Let us be content to live the goodly life of the brute, all careless of any life beside."

Contemporary with Epicurus was the austere founder of the Stoic school. He, supposing man to be undoubtedly master of his mind, made joy to consist in the conscious possession and proper

use of power, and in a victory over the baser desires. Man, he taught, must rise superior to all sensuality, to all vanity, to all the desires which agitate ordinary men; and he must find contentment in himself, and in what grows out of self. Thus will the wise man be protected against the assaults of fortune; thus will he find peace in the sense of his power, and happiness in the sense of his dignity. But in order to find this enjoyment he must detach himself from everything that men ordinarily look upon as the sources of happiness.

The views of one or other of these systems were the views which prevailed among men before the coming of Christ. Diametrically opposed to each other as they were in fundamental principles, Zeno² and Epicurus³ arrived at the same result on the question of happiness. They both made happiness to centre in self, for, in order to obtain it, they both alike demanded the suicide of the social affections. But neither promised that even such a sacrifice would necessarily yield the boon so much desired. And

² "Placet? Vive. Non placet? Licet eo reverti, unde venisti." *Seneca*, Epist. lxx.

³ "Non dubitat, si ita melius sit, migrare de vitâ." *Cicero*, De Finibus, i. 19.

should the experiment prove a failure, neither of them had anything further to offer, except the consolation of death. The philosophy of mind, as well as the philosophy of matter, prescribed suicide⁴. Seneca has devoted a whole letter to the several ways in which death may be found⁵. What a contradiction! What a satire upon happiness! The *summum bonum*,—to be content with self, and with what good grows out of self, and then to discuss how to put an end to self. What can the happiness be, from which deliverance is sought as from a plague?

Here, as elsewhere, Christianity went to the root of the matter, and explained why it is that the joys of earth are disappointing. Christ tells us that it is because we ask too much of them,—because we seek in what is of the earth, and finite, satisfaction for longings which reach out after the heavenly and infinite. Wandering away as we do from our Father's presence, and banished from our home, and having that within us which will never wholly let us forget the sweetness of that home, it is in vain for us to seek for a pleasure that will satisfy us, in the brightest scenes of the land of our exile.

⁴ *De Champagny*, Les Césars, i. 322 sq.; iv. 198 sq.

⁵ Epist. lxx.

Nevertheless, Jesus does not inveigh against the vanity of joys on earth. On the contrary, there is much in the story of His life to shew that in place of forbidding them, He did not hesitate to value them at their true worth. He withdrew not from scenes of festivity. He was not blind to the beauties of nature. The glories of the rising and the setting sun; the growing corn and the ripening grain; the charms that arrayed the lilies of the field; these all could move His spirit. The joys that stir the inmost depths of feeling at sight of childhood's docile innocence; the pure delights of friendship; all these were dear to Him.

But, if Christianity differs from both the Stoic and the Epicurean philosophies in not requiring us to surrender intimate relationships with others, by reason of the trouble that may attach to them, it still demands that we shall make sacrifices,—that we shall give up much to which the heart of man is very prone. It calls upon us to abjure self; to renounce all those desires, which, aiming only at personal enjoyment, can have no other effect than to contract our affections, stifle our sympathies, and harden our hearts. It calls upon us to combat and to subdue those malicious passions, which create unrest and tumult at once

within us and around us. And it will not permit us to have any dalliance with those attractive but perilous propensities, which so easily rob us of purity and peace and self-respect.

Such are the things which Christianity prohibits. Can their sacrifice,—like the sacrifice of those things which the prevailing philosophies forbade,—be regarded as in any way curtailing the sum of human enjoyment? It is not those affections which are capable of yielding the purest delights, but the “lusts which war against the soul⁶”—uncleanness, hatred, strife, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like⁷—that come under the ban of Christianity. If the treatment which it prescribes be accompanied with suffering, it is not the pain of cauterising a healthy nerve, but the pain of excising a fatal gangrene. Its result is, not to leave the patient without power of feeling, but to restore to him, in a state of health free from disease, the primary condition of all enjoyment.

Let us pass to the consideration of suffering. Heathenism is sometimes seriously represented as having in it nothing but peace and brightness. Under its influence men are said to worship their gods with cheerfulness and contentment.

⁶ 1 Peter ii. 11.

⁷ Gal. v. 19-21.

It was the Jews and the Christians, we are told, who first introduced asceticism into the world by drawing gloomy pictures of life and of its duties⁸. According to this theory, wherever Christianity is not, contentment reigns supreme in the heart of man. But how far do facts support such a theory?

"To live in sorrow,—such," says one Greek poet, "is the lot which the gods have given to miserable mortals⁹." Another says, "It were well for men that they had never been born, that their eyes had never seen the brightness of the sun¹⁰." A third declares, "It is better to die than live, for the heart has many troubles¹¹." The father of history tells us of a tribe which was accustomed to sit around a new-born child, and bemoan the evils which it was destined to endure throughout its life¹². And it was a common opinion among the ancients, that "next to the supreme good fortune of never being born, and thus avoiding the difficulties and dangers of life,

⁸ *Darwin* was under this impression, until his experience of the cheering and happy influence of Christianity upon those natives of the Southern Islands who had embraced it, dispelled the error. He bears strong testimony to the good effect of the Gospel, in his *Voyage of a Naturalist*.

⁹ *Iliad*, xxiv. 525.

¹⁰ *Theognis* of Megara.

¹¹ *Mimnermus*.

¹² *Herodot.*, lib. v. c. 4.

the happiest lot for any one, who comes into the world, is to die at the moment of his birth, and thereby to escape from fortune as from a raging fire¹³." It would be no difficult task greatly to enlarge this body of testimony to the inherent dissatisfaction of the heart of man with the life of man on earth. The literature of Greece and Rome abounds with evidence of the condition of spiritual unrest in which the most enlightened men who knew not Christ were wont to spend their days¹⁴.

But the proof of the proposition that unchristianized man is deeply conscious of his need of consolation, does not rest alone upon the testimony of such citations. A single fact will make it still more clear what his real estimate of life is. Among the nations of antiquity, the priest was merely a government official charged with the duty of performing certain ceremonies belonging to the religion of the state. He had no concern with personal morality. In his relations with society there was

¹³ This saying appears again and again in the Ancient Classics. It is met with in *Bacchylides*, *Theognis*, *Posidippus*, *Silenus*, *Krantor*, *Plutarch*, *Cicero*, *Seneca*. See *Lasaulx*, *Studien des klassischen Alterthums* (De Mortis Dominatu in Veteres), p. 485 sq. Cf. Rom. viii. 22.

¹⁴ See ch. ii. note 5, p. 10.

nothing in any way corresponding to what we understand by the cure of souls. But the demand, for that which the state failed to give, may be inferred from the attempts of private enterprise to supply it. Independent of the priesthood there was a class of men who made a profession of ministering comfort to the afflicted. Like those who ministered medicinal aid to bodily suffering, these physicians of "the mind diseased" made the public aware where they lived by a sign upon their houses; visited their patients, and furnished their account for attendance. They had a professional literature, and published many manuals, formally prescribing the several discourses to be used in each particular kind of suffering. In fact, so deep, and so generally felt was the need of comfort, that it actually became the basis of a lucrative profession ¹⁵.

When such comfort as could be obtained from these men proved unavailing, the prescription of philosophy, as we have seen, was the dismal refuge of suicide.

Very different was the teaching of Christianity. That teaching is all embraced in the simple state-

¹⁵ *Martha*, *Les Consolations de l'Antiquité*, in the *Séances et Travaux de l'Académie des Sciences morales, et politiques*, tom. C. pp. 331 sq.; 645 sq. quoted by *Naville*.

ment that the Creator of the Universe, without Whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, is our loving Father. Without attempting to satisfy curiosity by any explanation of life's great riddle,—the existence of evil,—it reveals the sweet uses of adversity to a sinful race; and pointing to a woe such as never man endured, as exhibiting the Father's unutterable love, it enables the patient sufferer to rejoice, inasmuch as he is a partaker of Christ's sufferings¹⁶.

That from out the bitterness of suffering there does spring up joy to the Christian, no one can deny. But only those, who are familiar with the poor and the sorrowful, know how their heaviness is turned into joy, and how they find in their faith such comfort as the philosopher sought for in vain.

And this brings us to the third point of our consideration,—death.

The hope of immortality is so agreeable to our instinctive longings, as to have been always an element of general belief among men. But often perverted and disfigured, it grew less instead of greater,—less prevalent instead of more prevalent, before the coming of Christ. Whether we listen to Cæsar addressing the senate, or to

¹⁶ 1 Pet. iv. 13.

Cicero defending his client¹⁷, we feel that the educated Roman mind had rejected the doctrine of a life beyond the grave¹⁸. Where faith in another life did still survive, it only filled men's hearts with dread.

Very different was the view of death taught by Christ. See the firm and simple assurance with which He speaks of the future. Alluding to His own approaching death, He said to His disciples: Let not your heart be troubled. In My Father's house are many mansions. Where I am there shall ye be also. It is not however merely a promise of a future life that Christianity opposes to the sufferings of death. It actually claims to be *founded* on the fact that Christ in His own person has "overcome death," and thereby opened to mankind the gate of everlasting life. It says: When death has robbed you of those who are dear to you, sorrow not even as others which have no hope. If ye believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, ye may rest assured, that, whether we wake in busy life, or sleep in peaceful death, we shall live together with Him. Comfort one another with these words¹⁹.

¹⁷ *Sallust*, Catal. Conjur. li; *Cicero*, Pro Cluentio.

¹⁸ *Pliny* the Elder regards the doctrine of an accountable immortality as an invention of childish folly; Nat. Hist. lib. vii. c. 55.

¹⁹ 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

In proclaiming that Christ had risen from the dead, the Apostles taught,—as a fact no longer open to question,—that which, till then, had been to the wisest but a vain surmise, that death is but the entrance into life. Before Christ there issued from the heart of man faint and fitful glimmerings of hope. But He, and He alone, has brought life and immortality to light. He is the Great Consoler. He it is Who alone can comfort us in view of death. The philosopher might speculate on the immortality of the soul, but when his daughter died, his reasonings gave him neither solace nor support²⁰. Read the so-called consolations of the heathen sage, and say whether to the bruised heart they could ever have been more than a hollow mockery²¹. Cross the Appian Way, from the Columbaria to the Catacombs,—place side by side the heathen and the Christian epitaphs, and read in those authentic registers, how, without Christ, death meant despair; with Christ, peace. As it was from the beginning, so is it still. Go into the house of mourning. If there be no faith there, you will find either indifference,

²⁰ *Cicero*, *Ad Fam.* iv. 5.

²¹ As when *Seneca* consoles a mother, who has lost her only son, by reminding her that it adds to the power and influence of old age to be without children. *Ad Marciam*, xix. 2.

despondency, or gloomy resignation to inexorable fate. But pass the threshold of a Christian family lamenting its dead. The pain of grief may pierce in bitterness to the soul's quick. But through the tears of sorrow rises a trustful calm, a lively hope. Stand by the open grave, while those who have no faith inter their dead, without a thought that looks to the future, without a ray of hope to brighten the gloom. Does not such a scene strike us as having something in it colder than the tomb itself, more dismal than the sound of the earth striking the coffin-lid? How different when believers commit to the earth the mortal part of those they love! Their eyes indeed gush out with tears. But their hearts are lifted up to Heaven, by the blessed hope and humble trust, that those, whose departure they lament, are indeed "not lost, but gone before."

The teaching of Christianity on enjoyment, on suffering, and on death, received into the hearts of men, has brought about marvelous changes in the condition of human life. Three hundred years had not passed before its effect was felt in making smooth the rough places of the earth. I do not wish to deny that it was possible to find among the ancients good hearts, acts of kindness, nay, even something of the

nature of charitable institutions²². To the shipwrecked, barbarous islanders could show no little kindness: the wounded soldier was sometimes tended: the stranger hospitably received²³. The instinctive impulse of the human heart prompted men to isolated acts of kindness, and even the more deliberate practice of benevolence is recommended by many of the philosophers. But it is recommended on selfish grounds²⁴. The spirit of love towards man had little share in the benevolences of the time. They were rather a ransom paid by timid wealth for immunity from the vengeance of desperate poverty²⁵. The prevailing attitude of man towards man is well summed up in the words of Plautus, "Man is a wolf to the man he does not know²⁶."

²² The *Præfectus annonæ* may have been a sort of relieving officer.

²³ Acts xxviii. 2; *Livy*, lib. ii. c. 47; *Tacitus*, Ann. c. iv. 63. Polytheism, far from fostering such sentiments of humanity, tended rather to choke and destroy them. *Meiners*, *Gesch. der Religionen*. Band i. 77.

²⁴ One advises it because it will bring tranquillity to the State, and popularity to the individual (*Arist.*, *Ethics*, iv. 2). Another advocates the better treatment of slaves, simply as conducing to the interest of the master (*Plato*, *De Leg.* lib. vi). A third urges the exercise of hospitality, because it increases the reputation of the wealthy citizen, if he is careful in the selection of those whom he entertains (*Cicero*, *De Offic.* ii. 18; cf. i. 16).

²⁵ *Naudet*, *Des Secours Publics*, pp. 36, 37, 88.

²⁶ *Plautus*, *Asin.*, Act ii. Sc. 4. 88.

How, for instance, did the heathen act in time of pestilence? Those who were beginning to suffer, they drove from them; from their dearest friends, they fled; the half-dead, they cast into the streets; and the dead, they left unburied²⁷. On like occasion the Christian bishop, calling his people together, reminds them what their Faith requires of them. Thereupon, heedless of the dread disease, not sparing themselves, they sought out, and tended the deserted sick, comforted and supported the dying, and ministered to the wants of all, heathen and Christian alike²⁸.

Such an incident as this illustrates well the practical character of the new power, which faith in a risen Christ had introduced into the world. Faith, I say, in a risen Christ; for if Christianity has purified and hallowed and enhanced the best joys of earth, it is because it has had power to make men believe in a risen Lord. If it has mitigated, if it has ennobled, if it has consecrated suffering, it is because it has had power to make men reckon the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to the partakers of His Resurrection. If it has taught men to meet

²⁷ *Euseb.*, vii. c. 22.

²⁸ *Pontius Diac.*, Vita S. Cypriani, cc. 9, 10.

death, not with the wild joy of the reckless fanatic, nor with the rigid indifference of the fatalist, but as thankfully welcoming a messenger of peace, it is because it has had power to fill them with a sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although Christ does not set happiness before His disciples as the great object of their life, it is not too much to assert, that,—view the question as you may,—He is the great author of happiness to man²⁹. For to His influence is unquestionably due the wondrous change that has taken place in man's condition,—the great social resurrection which it is altogether impossible to deny.

²⁹ "Oh! Chose admirable! La Religion Chrétienne, qui ne semble avoir d'objet que la félicité de l'autre vie, fait encore notre bonheur dans celle-ci." *Montesquieu*, *Esprit des Lois*, xxiv. 3.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIANITY IN RELATION TO MATERIAL PROSPERITY.

BODILY comfort was the avowed object of the Gentiles' pursuit. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed¹?"

But Jesus forbids His followers to be anxious about such matters. He declared it to be the primary object of His mission to save the world from evil. The kingdom of God, and the righteousness of God,—these are the things at which His disciples are to aim. Their great reward is a heavenly reward.

But the godliness which He came to implant, along with the promise of the life to come, has also the promise of the life that now is. His Father, He asserts, Who arrays the lilies with glory, is not unmindful of the bodily wants of His higher creatures.

It is the clear, express promise of Jesus, that those, who live as valuing most highly the hea-

¹ Matt. vi. 31.

venly reward, shall not be left without reward on earth.

Has this promise been fulfilled?

This question is not to be answered by any arguments drawn from individual cases. General truths are not to be tested by particular instances. We must inquire, therefore, how Christianity affects the temporal prosperity, not of individual Christians, but of Christian communities.

The highest state of material progress attained before the coming of Christ, for all its splendour and magnificence, presents but a dismal picture. Acquaint yourself with the life of the Romans, and you will come to the conclusion, that in ancient civilization there was really very little that was not out of joint. Tracing the result to the causes which produced it, the modern historian has no difficulty in discovering, beneath and behind the visible derangements of society, the fatal germs of ruin, in its defective morality, and in the vicious principles of its economy. The symptoms point the expert student of Christian times at once to the disease. But for the treatment of its suffering, pre-Christian civilization knew no better remedy than the will of the strongest, and possessed no higher resource than the violent repression of material force.

Starting from a low view of human nature, statesmen regarded society as a conglomerate of discordant elements, which they proceeded to reduce to order as best they could, without regard to any principle of right.

Taught by instinct, by necessity, by experience, and by reason, they made provision for the security of the state. No unprejudiced mind can withhold praise from much that was said and done by their sages and legislators. But whether we examine their conception of private, of social, or of national rights, we are at once struck by the absence from it of all that we now regard as the very source of prosperity.

Judged by our standard they failed from the beginning. From infancy to old age, in the highest rank as in the lowest, what we understand by security of life was a thing unknown.

The crime of infanticide has been practised all the world over. In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in the Islands of the ocean, the new-born babe has been sacrificed either to want, or luxury, or pride, or superstition. At Rome it was no uncommon practice to make a pre-nuptial agreement that boys only should be reared². The orphan was not safe from the poison

² Cf. *Stobæus*, *Florilegium*, lxxv.

of the guardian to whom his property was entrusted³. The husband poisoned his wife to enjoy her dowry, the wife her husband to marry another. Under Augustus, will-hunting was an act systematically practised, and the physician was the ready and skilful poisoner⁴. Three thousand persons were put to death in part of one season for crimes of this kind⁵. The purple itself failed to protect its wearer from violent death. Of the Emperors before Constantine, more than 80 per cent. were sacrificed either to war, conspiracy, or private hate. The hideous practice of human sacrifice also demanded its yearly tithe of victims. For it was not only wild and savage barbarians who offered their sons and their daughters to devils; it was not only Druid priests and Aztec rulers who thus spilt human blood⁶; the practice was common to Greece and Rome⁷.

³ Nor indeed from his own mother. *Juvenal*, Sat. vi. 629.

⁴ *Seneca*, De Beneficiis, vi. 38; *Tacitus*, Annales, i. 73; *Pliny*, Nat. Hist. xxix. 20.

⁵ *Livy*, xl. 43.

⁶ See above, ch. iii. note 25, p. 40.

⁷ *Forbiger*, Hellas und Rom. v. 15 sq., 39, 82, 101. *Schoemann*, Griech. Alterthümer, ii. 223, 227, 443, 449. The Pelasgi devoted a tenth of their offspring, in order to escape the ravages of famine. Aristomenes sacrificed 300 noble Spartans at the altar of Jupiter. And the Lacedæmonians offered up a like number of victims to Mars. *Livy* tells us that human sacrifice, though not originating with the Romans, was often practised by them under public authority. And even Augustus,

To all this must be added the fact, that men passed their days in an almost chronic state of civil tumult, in which defeat meant banishment or death. Our minds shudder at the appalling accounts of wholesale cold-blooded slaughter, with which the pages of ancient history teem; and we cannot realize the condition of society under which the butchery of thousands, without trial and without compunction, was a common occurrence.

Amid such scenes it was idle to talk of liberty. In the most civilized nations a large proportion of mankind lived in a state of legal servitude⁸. But these were not the only slaves: for not even the free man could be free.

The whole fabric of society was built upon a wrong basis. Whether under the form of a monarchy, an oligarchy, or a democracy, it was only the tyrannous domination of the most powerful. To minds familiar with the systems of government which prevail in Christian countries, the character of that domination appears incredibly ruthless⁹. Among the states of antiquity, Athens

in the second Triumvirate, offered 300 persons of rank to the Manes of Julius Cæsar, on the Ides of March. *Sueton.*, Oct., c. xv; *Dion Cassius*, xlviii. 14.

⁸ See next chapter, p. 93 sq.

⁹ *Hume* pronounces the Greek tyrannies to have been "al-

was foremost in civilization, and its government was distinguished for its leniency. And yet in Athens, the social forces which we note in constant action are selfishness, suspicion, oppression, and terror¹⁰. Wealth was the object of a jealous hatred, which made the life of its possessor unendurable¹¹. Personal eminence of any kind led to ostracism, and even his uprightness exiled Aristides.

At Rome, so weary had society become of the hollow mockery of liberty, that it was fain, under guise of changing its form of government, to place upon its neck the foot of an imperial despot¹².

And this absence of all personal independence was in no way due to the mad caprice of a single tyrant. It was the natural outcome of the principles on which society was founded.

together horrible." Having illustrated their character, by enumerating certain wholesale banishments and massacres, he adds, "It is to be remarked that Agathocles was a man of great sense and courage, and is not to be suspected of wanton cruelty contrary to the maxims of his age." *Essay on the Populousness of the Ancients*, pt. ii. and note BB.

¹⁰ "The same principle of jealous emulation, or cautious politics produced the ostracism of Athens, and the petalism of Syracuse, and expelled every citizen whose fame or power overtopped the rest." *Hume*, *Essay on the Balance of Power*.

¹¹ *Xenophon*, *Sympos*.

¹² "Augustus cuncta discordiis civilibus fessa, nomine principis, sub imperium accepit." *Tacitus*, *Ann.* i. 1.

In its very structure and organization, society was artificial. Not to the individual,—not to the natural association of individuals in the home,—but to the artificial aggregate, the state, every interest was referred. The individual and the home were nothing; the state was everything¹³. In its tyranny it robbed the citizen of his personality as a man; and he, in his turn, played the despot towards those who were dependent upon him. What the citizen was to the state, wife, and child, and slave were to husband, father, and master.

All relations of life were affected equally by this sacrifice of every natural claim to the thralldom of the state. When the nearer bonds of fellow-citizens were thus systematically unrecognized, it is not surprising that all remoter ties should be ignored. To all human beings outside themselves, the most cultured nations applied, in contempt and hatred, the common name barbarian. Neither Sparta, nor Athens, nor Rome saw any object to pursue beyond the limits of their own territory, but the enslavement of the stranger, and the oppression of the conquered. Such a policy could only lead to the establishment of servitude as a permanent institution; and this in turn disastrously warped the tendencies of civilization, and

¹³ *Aristotle*, *Polit.*, lib. viii. c. i; *Plato*, *De Leg.*, lib. ii.

enfeebled still further the moral and material strength of the people, until there remained no longer any hope of its recovery.

Industrial labour, which is at the bottom of all economic and social enterprise, was handed over to slaves, and sank in popular esteem, until it came to be regarded as beneath the dignity of the free man¹⁴. At the call of ambition, partisanship, or conquest, the enterprise of the citizen was easily awakened. But it was fitful and spasmodic; and as soon as the excitement subsided, he sank again into a state of fatal depression and sloth.

Antiquity had but little idea of promoting national prosperity by the laborious and intelligent development of its resources. Its history presents us with a series of monarchies, republics, or confederations, more or less durable, alternately conquering or conquered, invading or invaded, whose power, founded on the right of the strongest, falls of itself. The history of Rome itself, in all its greatness, is but a repetition of the same picture with more splendour, and on a grander scale.

¹⁴ *Columella*, the most celebrated agriculturist of the Roman Empire, only sixty years removed from the author of the *Georgics*, in the preface of his *De Re Rusticâ* traces the depression of agriculture directly to the degradation of morals.

To keep itself from utter stagnation, the state was forced, either to pursue unceasingly a policy of foreign aggression, or to encourage civil strife. Even in the later days of the Republic, unless engaged in party struggle or intestine war, the rich had no resource but frivolous and vicious amusement; while the poor, debauched by state doles, sank into the helpless, hopeless state of self-contempt.

Nothing that gives health and vigour to modern life,—no sense of brotherhood among men, no love of truth, of liberty, of justice,—could thrive in this atmosphere. Society was indeed the organized violation of all those principles; and although the natural instincts of the human heart did not let them wholly perish, they survived only in the form of a powerless protest against the prevalent depravity; and before the coming of Christ, society had sunk into that indefinable state of corruption, in which slavery and licence had everywhere supplanted subjection and liberty¹⁵.

¹⁵ The condition, in which the highest non-Christian civilization left the world, is pictured at length by *L. Friedlaender* (*Sittengeschichte*), a writer to whom I am much indebted. He supports no pet views. He draws no conclusions. He takes much pains to distinguish between what is certain and what is only probable, or possible. His learned work has been translated into French and into Italian. I have used the French Translation by *Ch. Vogel*. Paris, 1865.

From the first, however, Christianity made men feel that we are all the children of a common Father, that we are bound to love and serve Him with all the heart and soul, and that we exemplify and prove our love by loving our brethren, His children. Thus, while changing men's conception of the relation which they bore to each other, did it supply the highest motive for the discharge of the duties arising out of that relation. The Gospel placed moral obligation above positive command¹⁶, and changed the views, the temper, and the character of man. Henceforth the individual felt himself to be more than a subject of the government under which he lived. He belonged to a kingdom which taught him higher rights, nobler duties, truer liberty;—the right, amid the tumultuous strife of nations, in patience to possess his soul, the duty to shun the evil and do the good, the liberty in all things to obey a Master Whose service is perfect freedom, and while on earth to breathe a life Divine, and know himself a citizen of heaven.

Thus endowed with a consciousness of his dignity, man began to exert an energy, and to apply a perseverance which should enable him to live more worthily. He began by putting a higher estimate

¹⁶ See *Butler*, *Analogy*, pt. ii. chap. i.

on human life. The Gospel proclamation, that one perfect and sufficient sacrifice had been offered, once for all, for the sins of the whole world, put an end to the hideous practice of immolating human victims. Individual violence was lessened, exposed children were rescued, public tyranny was restrained, woman was elevated, labour was dignified, the slave was set free, gladiatorial combats ceased, the horrors of war were mitigated, peace was fostered, manners were softened, and noble sentiments, lofty aspirations, generous enthusiasms, were awakened.

All these activities we can trace at work from the first days of Christianity in the corrupt society of Rome. They came into operation too late, to restore to the vigour of youth a society exhausted by the luxuries of an irreligious civilization. But even amid the corruptions of Roman society, Christianity shewed itself possessed of a virtue to alleviate the disease, and to mitigate the suffering. The change of character which it wrought in the individual made its impress on the family. The life of the Christian family taught its lesson to a larger circle, and, ever radiating outward, next affected public opinion, until it changed not only the customs of society, but the laws and institutions of the state. Modern society never

hesitates to admit, with gratitude, that it has inherited from Rome many of its noblest laws and greatest institutions. It is not always so ready to remember the fact, that it is to Christianity that the inheritance owes its highest value¹⁷.

Christianity purged the world from the corrupt heathen civilization in which it found it. And in the process it preserved whatever was worth preserving. This was its first triumph. Its next work was altogether different, but not less noble. It triumphed over the barbarism which over-ran its first field of labour. Purifying with one hand the unclean morals of Rome and Corinth, with the other it tamed the wild hordes which poured down from the north. And the modern world, with its morality, its intellect, and its industries, is the result of this great work. In tracing the growth of modern civilization, the historian sees the influence of Christianity at every stage. What before was the vain vision of a few, becomes the actual possession of ever-increasing numbers. Addressing its instruction to the poor, Christianity wrought the widest and the most permanent revolution in the world's history. Outside Christianity,

¹⁷ "Mankind owe to Christianity a political right, for which they can never be sufficiently grateful." *Montesquieu*, *Esprit des Lois*, xxiv. 3.

culture has always shewn itself to be exclusive. Its motto has always been "to hate and to hold aloof the crowd profane¹⁸." Standing on the pinnacle of his own superior culture, the pre-Christian philosopher looked with contempt upon the vulgar herd. Christianity unlocked the treasury of lore to the humble and the needy. Beneath its influence everywhere arose seats of learning, which, by their very names, recall to-day their Christian origin¹⁹. Industrious intelligence among the poor was stimulated, being no longer left to grovel in ignorance and error as its proper element and its natural inheritance. And genius, in whatever rank of life, became the glad alumnus of an Alma Mater, who rejoiced to give to the service of mankind the fruitful labours and the noble lives of her illustrious sons. How far the progress of the world is due to the schools of learning which Christianity has founded, these short pages cannot attempt to shew²⁰. But a glance at the advance which has been made among the nations of the earth, by those who profess the

¹⁸ *Hor.*, *Carm.* iii. 1. 1.

¹⁹ "Toutes les universités de l'Europe ont été établies, ou par des princes religieux, ou par des évêques, ou par des prêtres, et toutes ont été dirigées par des ordres chrétiens." *Chateaubriand*, *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Partie iv, livre vi. c. 5.

²⁰ *Guisot*, *Hist. Mod.*, Lect. v.

Christian Faith, will be no unfitting close to this chapter.

Within seventy years of our Lord's crucifixion, His followers are computed to have amounted to half a million. In two hundred years more, the half million had grown into five millions,—a number which was doubled in another hundred years. During the four hundred years that follow there is a steady rise, until, in the year 800 of our era, the number had reached 30 millions. Thenceforth the regular increment is exchanged for a growing increment, notwithstanding the temporary check caused by the incursions of barbaric hordes from the north, and of the Saracens from the south and east. In the year A.D. 1000, the numbers stood at 50 millions. Five centuries sufficed to double this number. And the 100 millions of the year A.D. 1500 were doubled again in three centuries. During the present century the figures grow still faster. In 1880, the 200 millions with which the century began had become 440 millions.

But even these figures do not by any means represent the dominant advance of Christendom. These 440 millions are professors of the Christian Faith living under Christian government. But Christian government sways a much vaster

number. One hundred and eighty years ago, the subjects of the Christian powers were 155 millions. In 1876, they numbered 685 millions ²¹.

And it will further help us to form some adequate conception of the marvellous way in which Christianity has identified itself with all that is powerful, if we remember, that, in addition to these tributary millions, vast empires of non-Christian people retain to-day their independence, only on sufferance of the Christian powers; while not a single conquest made by any Christian people has ever been lost to men of another faith.

Ninety years ago, it was a common saying that in two generations Christianity would cease to exist. It has grown, as it never grew before. Even now, as then, we hear men,—men who owe their culture to their birth in the atmosphere of a Christian country,—declare, in the name of culture, that however the Christian Faith may continue to suit the lethargic, the ignorant, and the thoughtless, it can no longer be the religion of cultured men. But if these men be right, all the most civilized nations of the earth as yet are wrong.

²¹ See *The Problem of Religious Progress*, by *Daniel Dorchester*, D.D., New York, 1881; from which laborious work these figures are taken.

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT CHRISTIANITY HAS DONE IN THE WORLD.

IN examining the new forces which Christianity brought to bear upon society, I have asserted generally, that certain specific improvements,—which have undoubtedly found place in the condition of mankind,—result from the operation of those new forces. But it is important to shew that such assertions are only concise abridgments of history; and that it is possible, at every step along the progress, to trace the more or less direct action of unmistakeably Christian influences.

Familiar as we are with the existence of wrong as opposed to right, much as our own hearts and our experience of life teach us of the prevalence of moral evil, it requires somewhat of an effort, to realize how much greater it was before the coming of Christ. We read the noble senti-

ments of some great heathen, and we feel ourselves at once in the presence of earnestness and goodness greater than our own. The very feeling insensibly brings along with it the thought, that the society, which could produce such a man, must have attained to no mean moral level. But at the root of all conclusions drawn from a comparison of individuals, there lies a most treacherous fallacy. The fact that an excellent heathen may exhibit a larger amount of moral earnestness than a feeble Christian, affords no proof that heathenism is equal to Christianity. If we would truly estimate the relative merit of different systems, we must not compare the noblest production of the one with what is confessedly an imperfect production of the other. If the specimens compared are not also truly representative samples, the comparison can only lead to error. It is unfair, to compare the theoretic morality of the most enlightened heathen with the theoretic morality of the Christian crowd; much more to compare the practice of that same crowd with the theory of the heathen sage. The true rule of comparison is, theory with theory, and practice with practice. Fully to institute such a comparison would be to write a detailed history of human conduct.

Nothing affords a surer index to the state of society than the position it assigns to woman. For, in spite of all unnatural attempts to absorb everything in the state, the social and national condition of a people depends, and in time shews itself to depend, on the character of its domestic life. The home is the true mother of the state. Woman is the very life of the home. There were those among the Romans who referred the lamentable condition of society to the degradation of their women. To the pollution of conjugal fidelity, as to a source, Horace traces at once the calamities of the state, and the growing degeneracy of the people. The decay in private morals had led to public licentiousness, until the hardy manliness of the nation was gone, and each generation was becoming worse than that which preceded it¹.

The critic made no bad diagnosis of the disease, and of its cause; but his estimate of womanhood, and his relations with womankind, — both typical of non-Christian civilization, — alike illustrate the hopelessness of looking for a remedy to any influence then in operation. For what was the position of woman among those, whose native prowess, under the influence of the

¹ *Horace*, *Carm.* iii. 6. 17 sq.

highest civilization, had won for them the empire of the world?

Few contracts were less solemn than that of marriage. Easily entered into, it was as easily set aside. No appeal to public authority was necessary to dissolve it. At first, indeed, a formal ceremony corresponding to that of marriage was customary, but even this gradually fell into disuse, and at last, a mere notice of intention to separate put an end to the relation. This being so, one is not surprised to read that it was no unusual thing, when entering upon the state of matrimony, to look complacently forward to an early divorce as its natural termination. Under the empire, we read of women of rank counting their years, not by the consuls, but by the number of their husbands². Many women, we are told, had as many as eight husbands in five years, the marriage oft-times ending in divorce before the green bough, which decorated the door in honour of the bride, had time to wither away³. The popular amusements, and the popular writers of Imperial Rome testify to an appalling prevalence of unchastity⁴. Temples

² *Seneca*, *De Beneficiis*, iii. 16.

³ *Juvenal*, *Sat.* vi. 224 sq.

⁴ *Horace*, *Carm.* iii. 6. 17 sq.; 24. 25 sq.; *Martial*, *Epig.* iv. 71;

of chastity were in vain, when society placed no restraint on the conduct of married women⁵; when it could be said that it would be as easy to dry up the ocean, or draw down the stars, as to make the Roman women virtuous⁶. In fact, the picture of domestic immorality presented to us is such as it is impossible to put before a Christian reader. It is only fair indeed to admit, that, taken by themselves, many of the descriptions are exaggerated and overcharged. It is not in the prurient elegiacs of Ovid, nor in the merciless prose of Tacitus alone, much less is it in the pointed epigram or the stinging stricture, that we expect to find the uncoloured statement of facts. Nevertheless the popular literature, surpassing, in its spirit even more than in its expression, the vilest productions of the sort; the depraved and depraving licence exhibited in decorative art⁷; the intoxicating fascination of the pernicious spectacles and feasts⁸;

Juvenal, Sat. vi; *Seneca*, De Beneficiis, i. 9. 3; *Tacitus*, De Mor. Ger. xix.; *Tertullian*, De Pudicitia, c. v.

⁵ *Propertius*, Eleg., lib. ii. vi. 25, 26.

⁶ *Id.*, Eleg., lib. ii. xxxii. 49 sq.

⁷ *Propertius*, Eleg., lib. ii. vi. 27-34; *Seneca*, Controv. v. 33; *Tacitus*, Dialog. De Orator. c. xxix.

⁸ *Tacitus*, Germ. c. xix; *Statius*, Sylv. iii. 5. 15; *Ovid*, De Art. Amat. i. 89 sq.; *Tertullian*, De Spectaculis, c. xxv.; *Cyprian*, Ad Donat. p. 5, Oxford Ed. The representations are altogether

—all these things place the moral debasement of womanhood beyond a doubt.

The efforts of Augustus to restrain divorce were utterly futile: and it was in vain that Tiberius crucified the priests of Isis, demolished her temple, and threw the image of the goddess into the river⁹. To cure a society so deeply infected was beyond the power of any Epicurean emperor. When, however, the highest human authority was of no avail, the authority of Christ brought succour to degraded humanity. Christianity taught, that of twain wedlock makes one flesh, unites two persons by a bond, which, without sin, is not to be broken¹⁰. And this doctrine, not only preached, but practised by

unfit for description. Nothing was omitted which might gratify the grossest taste of the vulgar, or the worse depravity of the refined rake. What women, who still called themselves chaste, were accustomed to witness, may be imagined from *Martial's* statement, that his own writings contained nothing worse. *Epig.* iii. 86. *St. Augustine*, who, before his conversion, had been an eye-witness of what was put upon the stage in honour of gods and goddesses, declares the songs sung to have been unfit for any matron's ears. *Civ. Dei*, lib. ii. c. 4. And the licentiousness was part of a system upheld by the state. "*Hæc dedecora non poetarum, sed populorum; non mimorum, sed sacrorum; non theatrorum, sed templorum; id est, non fabulosæ, sed civilis theologiæ.*" *Civ. Dei*, lib. vi. 7.

⁹ *Dion Cassius*, liv. 16; *Josephus*, *Antiquities*, xviii. 3, 4.

¹⁰ *Matt.* xix. 5, 6; *Tertull.*, *Ad Uxorem*.

the early Christians, notwithstanding the licence of the existing laws, soon effected a salutary reformation of the laws themselves. By restricting the facility of divorce, Christianity has been the cause of more good to society than it is easy to estimate ; for it is to the inviolable character of the marriage-bond, that we must refer the right bringing-up of the young, the proper direction of every day life, the purity of domestic affections, and all the countless blessings which are characteristic of a Christian home.

Besides giving to marriage a new consecration, Christianity has given to virginity a new sanctity ; and to the whole life of woman a higher social value ; making her, who had been but a thrall or a plaything, the companion and the peer of man. And by thus restoring her to her proper place, it has elevated the home, where the heart receives its first education, and where it unfolds the wealth of its affections. Though the home is even still far from perfect, we see in the Christian family a picture of goodness and happiness, contrasting remarkably with the selfish tyranny, and loveless thralldom, which prevailed among some of the most cultured nations before the coming of Christ.

Another important index of the condition of society is found in its view of law, and in its manner of administering it. Rome was the fountain-head of law. Yet according to the XII Tables, it was not conscience, it was not any notion of right or of wrong, which laid men under obligations. They were bound by the form of words they used, and by nothing else. No promise or undertaking was supposed to have any wider application than its letter. There was no account taken of its spirit¹¹. And, thus defective as were the laws in themselves, their administration was even worse. In the days of Cicero, the system of judicature was so inconceivably corrupt, that it was considered impossible to have a verdict against a man of money, however guilty he might be¹². The moment that the voice of Christianity

¹¹ *Cicero* tells a story (*Offic.* iii. 16) illustrating this. *Pythius*, a Syracusan banker, fraudulently induces a Roman knight, named *Cassius*, to buy a villa on the sea-shore, where there was no fishing, by sending a number of boats to pretend to fish in front of it. Before *Cassius* discovers the imposition, the legal instrument is signed; and accordingly he has no redress. So inveterate was the evil that *Augustine* complains of it as still surviving in his own day. "Usque adeo autem hoc inolevit malum, ut jam quasi ex consuetudine vendantur leges, corrumpantur jura, sententia ipsa venalis sit, et nulla jam causa possit esse sine causâ." *Tom.* v. *App.* *Serm.* 82.

¹² *Cicero*, *In Verrem*, *Orat.* i. Some glaring instances of venality are quoted by *Troplong*, p. 66.

made itself heard, all was changed. The very form in which enactments began to appear expressly made them to rest upon the sanction of the Divine will, and appealed to religious motives for their observance¹³. And from the first, we trace a complete revolution in the whole system of administration. Under the first Christian emperor, the bishop began to act as judge among the people; settling disputes; interposing between master and slave, and between parent and child; providing guardians for the infant, and supporting the weak and helpless against the strong. And all these duties he discharged so wisely, so fairly, and so kindly, as to engender in the hearts of the people throughout the Empire, such a genuine love of justice, that even the pagans came and submitted their disputes to him¹⁴.

Again:—the action of Christianity is well illustrated in the history of slavery,—at once a monstrous violation of justice, and a source of infinite misery. No effort enables us to realize in all its fulness the sum of that misery. We have no means of knowing the exact proportion which the slaves bore to the free population in ancient times. We are told however that but a very small percentage of the inhabitants of

¹³ See The Capitularies, *passim*.

¹⁴ *Troplong*, p. 114.

Athens were free. At Sparta, so necessary was it deemed to keep down the number of slaves, that their massacre in cold blood was sanctioned by law, whenever their strength occasioned uneasiness to the state¹⁵. At Rome, they were so numerous as to deprive of employment the poorer classes of freemen; so numerous, as, rising in open revolt, to be able to hold the field against the legions for years together; so numerous, that a proposal, to make them wear a distinctive dress, was rejected, on the ground of its being unsafe to let them know how many they really were¹⁶. In the age of Augustus, it seems to have been impossible for any one who claimed to belong to society to keep less than ten slaves. Two hundred, however, was no uncommon number. And it often greatly exceeded this. A freedman under that emperor is said to have left at his death as many as 4116 slaves. Nay, we find it stated that 10,000, and even 20,000, sometimes belonged to a single master. The disreputable trade of the slave-dealer was very lucrative. Thracian parents were so devoid of natural affection, as to sell to him their children into bondage. He accompanied an army in time of war, and after

¹⁵ *Plutarch*, in *Lycurg*.

¹⁶ *Tacitus*, *Ann.* ix. 27; *Columella*, *De Re Rusticâ*, i. 8.

a great battle, it was no unusual thing for him to purchase from the quæstors, for a trifling sum, thousands of the vanquished at a time¹⁷. When the Cilician pirates had possession of the Mediterranean, as many as 10,000 slaves are said to have been imported and sold in the Delos market in one day.

And what was the lot of these untold numbers of human beings?

Allow that the slaves of good masters,—those born in the family,—were frequently treated with affection and kindness; allow that slavery itself marks a step in human progress,—that the slave was the captive preserved from death¹⁸:—yet often was it a cruel mercy which preserved him for his fate. For what was that fate? To be bought and sold in nakedness, like a brute beast; to till the ground in chains; to be tortured and tormented; to be beaten or stoned to death; to be stabbed or hanged, poisoned or crucified; to have his limbs furrowed with burning coals; to be torn to pieces by the claws of savage beasts; or, when too old for work, to be sent to starve to death on an island in the Tiber¹⁹;—and all this at the caprice of a cruel master.

¹⁷ *Livy*, lib. xlv. 34.

¹⁸ *Servus quasi servatus*.

¹⁹ *Sueton.*, in *Vitâ Claudii*.

Noble youths indulged in the pastime of murdering by the thousand their helpless fellow-creatures. For breaking a crystal vase, Vedius Pollio, a friend of Augustus, ordered one of his slaves to be thrown into the fish-pond, to become food for his lampreys²⁰. A senator had one of his slaves put to death, merely for the purpose of letting a friend gloat over the dying agonies of a fellow-creature²¹; and even Roman ladies treated their female slaves with barbarous inhumanity²².

Seneca has sketched in a few words the miserable daily life of these unfortunate creatures. Waiting upon their masters in their orgies of gluttony and shamelessness, they stood all night long, without food, without sleep, in mute impassibility. They uttered no murmur of complaint, for to make the slightest noise, to cough or to sneeze, nay, only to move the lips, was an offence to be punished with the dreadful lash²³.

Such was their cruel doom. And it was in vain for them to attempt to escape from it by flight. The law forbade anyone to receive or shelter the slave who ran away. Having no share in either the temples, the religious feasts, or the sacrifices, it was the fate of the slave to

²⁰ *Seneca*, De Irâ, iii. 40.

²² *Friedlaender*, p. 377.

²¹ *Plutarch*, in Q. Flamin.

²³ *Epist.* xlvii.

live and to die without a country, and without a god ²⁴. No words can tell the amount of human suffering caused by slavery ²⁵.

How did philosophy view this monstrous outrage to humanity? Many of the ancients did not regard the slave as being a man ²⁶. Aristotle defines him as an animated tool needful for life ²⁷. Varro classifies him as an instrument of work in the fields or in the house, differing from the brute only in having the faculty of speech ²⁸. And these definitions fairly represent the popular feeling with reference to the slave. And although a truer conception was not wholly absent from the heathen mind, it remained for Christianity, to spread abroad the truth, that the slave too belonged to the family of men. While Seneca ²⁹, in striking language, was calling the attention of a few men of culture to the claims of the slave, St. Paul was making known, to the world at large, the principles which ought to regulate the relations between master and servant. All

²⁴ *De Champigny*, Charité Chrétienne, p. 88. Paris, 1856.

²⁵ Slaves in despair sometimes took up arms against their masters, and then killed themselves over the bodies of their victims. See *Troplong*, p. 164.

²⁶ *Juvenal*, Sat. vi. 222.

²⁷ *Aristotle*, Pol. ii. 22.

²⁸ *Varro*, De Re Rusticâ, i. 17: cp. *Ulpian*, Digest, vi. 1. 15.

²⁹ *Epist.* xlvii.

praise is due to Seneca. But there is no reason to suppose that the just and noble views of the great Stoic brought about any material improvement in the condition of the slave. Nero issued an order, the first, it is said, which directed a magistrate to hear the complaints of slaves against the excesses of their masters. But historians are agreed, that this order, as well as some other measures subsequently adopted for improving the condition of slaves, was due, not to the influence of Seneca and Burrus, but to the growing importance of slaves as a class. And there was no thought of attacking slavery as an institution ³⁰.

From the first, however, Christianity raised its voice against it. It could not recommend the slaves to rise in revolt. Obedience was an integral part of its teaching. The Gospel taught that the slave is a man, and that all men are brothers. St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon is the charter of freedom to the slaves of antiquity. As far as was in its power, the Church gave effect to the principle laid down in that letter.

³⁰ See *Troplong*, De l'Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit Civil des Romains. Partie ii. chap. ii. If we are to believe *Seneca* (Epist. xlvii.), they continued to be worse treated than the beasts of burden.



Civil laws it could not make, but church rules it did make:—the master who has wronged his slave girl is obliged to marry her, an alliance altogether contrary to the prevailing habits and laws; the master who has ill-treated his servant is excommunicated, at a time when even the murder of a slave was no crime in the eye of the state; Christian burial is withheld from the kidnapper; the slave is authoritatively directed to refuse to obey his master, when his commands are contrary to the law of God; at the celebration of the Lord's Supper the Christian slave partakes, while the master, if but a catechumen, or under the ban of discipline, must retire³¹.

Thus, in the only way then possible to it, Christianity laboured to improve the condition of the slave, and Christian views of slavery gradually gained ground. We read of slaves being manumitted by thousands, upon the ground that those who have become children of God ought no longer to remain slaves of men. Giving legal effect to what under Christian influences had already grown into a custom, Justinian increased the facilities for setting free the slave, and

³¹ Apost. Constit. iv. 6. 12; *S. Chrysostom*, De Resurrectione iii; *Lactantius*, De Justitiâ.

made his freedom real. But the time was not yet come when slavery should utterly cease. To the liberated slave, freedom often proved such a cruel disappointment, that he was fain to return to his former bondage. Before the servile class, debased and brutalized by misery, could be ready for liberty, the civilizing effects of Christian principles must have time to impress themselves more deeply on human life; and though gradually softened by the influence of the Gospel, slavery continued to exist, and to feed itself at the impure streams of trade and conquest, until feudal times. It was only then, that the great doctrines of equality, propagated by Christianity, so permeated these multitudes, deprived of civil rights, exposed to the savage caprice of their masters, and crushed by the miseries of their vile condition, as to make them fit for liberty.

But in the west of Europe slavery seemed nearly dead, when unfortunately the relations between the Portuguese and Muhammedans led to its revival in 1444, in the form of the traffic in negroes.

To their shame, the Christian nations of Europe all shared in this iniquity. Portugal and Spain began; England, France and Holland

followed their example. From the first, however, by the voice of its missionaries, Christianity protested against this outrage upon the dignity of man; and the final overthrow of the system is historically traceable to Christian influences.

For generations the spirit of worldly interest and greed of gain was too strong, and the evil too far removed from the eyes of Christian Europe, to be forcibly realized by the public conscience. But in the last century the Quakers of America loudly declared slavery to be contrary to the Gospel of Christ. This protest awoke an echo in Christian hearts at home, which, after years of Christian labour, aroused the Christian conscience of the nation; until first it put a stop to the traffic in negroes, and finally, at a cost of twenty millions sterling, set them free.

It is still fresh in our memories, how younger nations have quite recently liberated their slaves. Urged by Christian impulse, the United States have emancipated the negro; Brazil has enacted a law of progressive liberation; and the Czar of Russia has given freedom to twenty millions of men.

Thus from first to last, in the gradual improvement in the condition of the slave, as in the ultimate abolition of slavery, history testifies to

the persistent and continuous operation of Christianity³².

The gladiatorial shows present us with another picture of inhumanity, on a scale that to us seems almost incredible. The scenes enacted in the arena had a horrible fascination even for those who were not naturally given to bloodshed. And these exhibitions had become so pre-eminently the favourite pastime of the people, that the statesman regarded them as necessary for the maintenance of social order³³. The shows were not confined to the capital, nor even to great occasions, nor to the public arena. They were introduced at private banquets, for the excitement and gratification of the guests³⁴. So popular was the sickening butchery, that we find the authorities repeatedly imposing limits upon the numbers of the combatants³⁵. In spite of these restrictions, however, it was no unusual thing to see two

³² On the relation of Christianity to slavery, see *Paul Allard*, *Les Esclaves Chrétiens*, Didier et Cie.; *Troplong*, *De l'Influence du Christianisme sur le Droit Civil des Romains*; *De Champagny*, *La Charité Chrétienne*; *Étienne Chastel*, *Études Historiques sur l'Influence de la Charité*; *Augustin Cochin*, *L'abolition de l'Esclavage*; *Wallon*, *Histoire de l'Esclavage*; *Naville*, *Le Christ*.

³³ *Friedlaender*, xxi.

³⁴ *Livy*, lib. ix. 40.

³⁵ *Sueton.*, *Cæsar*, c. x; *Plutarch*, *Cæsar*, c. v; *Dion Cassius*, liv. 2.

hundred pairs of gladiators engaged at a private entertainment ; and we read of these games costing Europe 20,000 or 30,000 lives in one month³⁶. The figures are not so surprising, when we remember that men glutted their eyes with regular battles, in which thousands were engaged, whose dead bodies were left in heaps upon the ground³⁷. As new countries were added to the growing empire, men were dragged to Rome from greater distances. And we find in the arena, side by side with the Suevi and the Daci, tattooed savages from Britain, and fair Germans from the Rhine, butchering one another "to make a Roman holiday"³⁸.

³⁶ *Lypsius*, Saturn, lib. i. c. 12, quoted by Porteus.

³⁷ *Friedlaender*, vol. ii. p. 102. Trajan exposed 10,000 prisoners to the wild beasts, at the spectacles given by him in honour of the submission of the Danube countries. *Dion Cassius*, lviii. 15.

³⁸ When unhappy captives found themselves face to face with such a fate, is it wonderful that they should attempt to escape it by suicide? We have more than one account of these attempts, told in such a way as to make it probable that they were very frequent. *Seneca* mentions a man, who, pretending to be asleep as he entered the arena, let his head drop between the spokes of the chariot, on which he was lying between two guards. Epist. lxx. A number of Saxon prisoners strangled each other on the very day they were to be slaughtered, rather than endure the horrors of the amphitheatre. *Symmachus*, in his account of the occurrence, adds, "We see that even special precautions could not hold the cursed hands of these desperate people." Epist. ii. 46.

To uproot an institution so firmly fixed in the passions of the populace, and, as a consequence, in the policy of the rulers, was hopeless; until the religion, which first brought home to men's hearts the full conviction of the immortality of the soul, and of the soul's redemption by Jesus Christ, had taught truer views of humanity, and a juster estimate of human life, to the mind of the populace itself. Constantine made a law prohibiting these combats, but he had not power to enforce it; and it was reserved to a humble monk to effect, by his death, what the power of the purple could not accomplish. With the martyrdom of Telemachus in A.D. 404, these bloody scenes came to an end³⁹.

The question of war furnishes another good illustration of the influence of Christianity. Thucydides does not misrepresent the feelings of the most civilized nations of antiquity when he says, "We should remember, that men are doing a most lawful act, when they take vengeance upon an enemy and an aggressor, and that they have a right to satiate their heart's animosity. . . . Wherefore let no one's heart be softened towards them⁴⁰." Contrast with this the Christian charge, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place

³⁹ *Theodorct*, Hist. Eccles. v. 26.

⁴⁰ *Thucydides*, vii. 68.

unto wrath⁴¹," and you will at once feel, that between the teaching of polytheism and the teaching of Christ, comparison is idle. In moral matters, practice does not rise higher than sentiment. And we know as actual fact, that before Christianity, the lust of power and conquest led to well-nigh constant war⁴², which was entered upon in wantonness, carried on with cruelty, and brought to an end with inhuman disregard to the rights of the conquered. It must be admitted with sorrow that the day has not yet come, when the nations learn war no longer. But even upon war, Christianity has exerted a happy influence.

The more the law of Christ has prevailed, teaching us to do to others as we would have them do to us, the justifiable causes of war have become fewer and fewer⁴³. We have come to regard war between civilized nations for the sake of mere aggression and conquest as an enormous crime. The maintenance of justice and freedom is now regarded as alone warranting bloodshed. We no longer pledge our faith to a besieged

⁴¹ Rom. xii. 19.

⁴² The Temple of Janus was closed only three times, and never for long, during a period of nearly seven centuries.

⁴³ The Alabama claims would have inevitably led to war in pre-Christian days.

garrison, and then put them to the sword. The bloodshed of the field of battle is no longer followed by the savage ruin and indiscriminate massacre of the unarmed⁴⁴. It is now the practice to abstain from all unnecessary violence and wanton depredation. The wounded are tenderly nursed under the sacred neutrality of the Red Cross; the prisoner is treated with honourable courtesy; the conquered district is ruled with justice.

The history of these changes in the conduct of war is, from the beginning, traceable to the influence of Christianity. Even Gibbon acknowledges that on the fall of the Roman Empire, it evidently "mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors⁴⁵." The rude Goths who took Rome under Alaric were Christians; and rarely perhaps has the power of Christianity shewn itself more marvellously than in restraining the passions of these rough men in the headlong flush of victory. Sanctuary was respected; and by order of the barbarian general, all who fled to the churches found safety.

⁴⁴ The execution of a few captives condemned after trial in the late Afghan war raised an outcry of indignation which wholesale butchery in days gone by failed to excite.

⁴⁵ *Decline and Fall*, vol. vi. p. 402, 1825.

So completely indeed has the public conscience of Christian nations been changed with regard to war, as to outweigh even the sweetness of revenge. On the fall of Paris in 1814, the retaliation of the Allies for Napoleon's glaring outrage against Christian sentiment, was the frequent exhibition, at the illuminations in London, of the significant legend "Moscow burnt,—Paris saved."

It will help us to realize the magnitude of the change that has taken place, if we remember the lot which awaited the vanquished among the Greeks and Romans. When a town was taken, its inhabitants were often sold to the highest bidder,—soldiers, statesmen, men of wealth, men of learning, venerable matrons, mothers of young families, innocent maidens, and helpless infants,—all alike, without distinction. Between us and such a fate, there is a great gulf fixed. How came it there? It is the work of the slow, but sure influence of Christianity upon the hearts of men, improving their morals, removing their prejudices, and elevating their desires; in a word, changing heathenism into that pure civilization, of which Jesus of Nazareth is the only author.

It is important to bear in mind, that, however revolting be the picture which I have drawn of

non-Christian society, all that I have said is no unfriendly caricature of what occurred but seldom, in rare paroxysms of cruelty. It is no more than a sketch, faithful in every line, of nothing accidental or occasional, but of the normal state of society, established by custom, and sanctioned by law,—a state of society in which alike the head of the statesman, and the heart of the wife and mother were, in the forcible but not exaggerated language of St. Paul, “full of murder, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful⁴⁶.” The pagan world had no ear to hear the cry of woe⁴⁷; revolt alone could obtain a hearing, violence alone could ring concessions from the state, which, in its fear, would hurriedly release the debtor, distribute conquered territory, give food to the starving citizens, and even enact agrarian laws. But all these concessions were withdrawn, as soon as the danger had passed, and the wretched sufferers had settled down in their accustomed apathy.

The transformation effected by Christianity is

⁴⁶ Rom. i. 29, 31.

⁴⁷ Compassion was a mark either of weakness (*Tusc. Disp.*, lib. iv), or of baseness (*Seneca*, *De Clem.*, lib. xi). It was the happiness of the wise, to be a stranger to all sympathy with the sorrows of the poor (*Virgil*, *Georg.* ii. 499). It was the wisdom of the happy, to court the prosperous, and to avoid the afflicted (*Lucan*, viii. 487).

truly marvellous. While the arena crumbled into ruin, homes for the houseless poor, and hospitals for the stranger, the aged, the sick, and the orphan, arose in country districts, as well as in large towns⁴⁸. He who in times past had delighted in cruelty and bloodshed, made it now his daily care to relieve distress. The wealthy from his abundance; the trader from his gains, the soldier from his pay, the workman from his wages, all brought to the church a portion for their suffering brethren⁴⁹. In subsequent history, it is true, worldliness, prejudice, and passion have too often overborne the beneficent instincts of Christian charity. But in modern times it has shewn itself to possess the same character as of old. The miserable traditions, which, under the pretence of securing safety, made prisons and

⁴⁸ *Basil*, Ep. 142, 143. Cf. *Euseb.* vi. 43. 5; vii. 5. 1; *Cyprian*, Ep. 36, 61.

⁴⁹ In Egypt we find monkish communities numbering sometimes 5,000 or 10,000 men, whose industry made their rich soil bring forth abundant fruit, all of which they distributed to the needy, first feeding those around them, and then sending boats laden with grain to the distressed population in remoter districts. *Sozomen*, vi. 28; *Theodoret*, x. 30; *Augustine*, De Morib. Eccl. i. 31. Christianity shews itself to be possessed of the same power still. In 1870, the Christian natives of the Sandwich Islands sent a sum of more than 400*l.* to the sufferers in the Franco-German war. *C. De Varigny*, Quatorze Ans aux Iles Sandwich.

lunatic asylums haunts of the blackest barbarity, have vanished under the compulsion of Christian gentleness. For in both these cases the blessed change is due to the action of earnest men, who found it impossible to reconcile such un-Christian practice with Christian profession⁵⁰. In fact, from the beginning to the present day, may be traced the steady set of a slow but constant current, which has had power to move the stagnant pool of selfish hearts, until a practical beneficence, distinctly Christian in its origin and in its aims, holds a prominent place among the activities of modern life.

⁵⁰ To the S. P. C. K. belongs the honour of inaugurating the movement which is generally supposed to have had its origin in the work of John Howard. More than a quarter of a century before the birth of the great philanthropist, and nearly three quarters of a century before he became sheriff of Bedfordshire, the Society had not only begun a system of prison visitation, but had also taken measures to force upon the attention of the legislature the misery and shame of prison life.

CHAPTER VII.

CAN CULTURE DO AS MUCH?

IN recent times it has often been expressly asserted, and it is still more often vaguely assumed, that the progress which has undoubtedly been made in human society is very little indebted to Christian influence. The improvement, we are told, is the natural fruit, not of Christianity, but of civilization. If we are what we are, it is because we are men, not because we are Christians.

As a matter of undoubted fact, admitted on all sides, it is under the influence of Christianity that society has grown into what it is. That it could have become what it is without Christianity is a mere assumption. I now propose to inquire how far the facts of history lend support to such an assumption.

The theme is vast and difficult. To treat it fully would require, not a chapter, but many volumes; and to handle it worthily would

demand the very highest gifts of critical skill. To attempt to trace back any single social fact of to-day to all the different causes in history which have had a share in producing it, and to determine the measure in which they have severally contributed to its production, would be a large undertaking. But to pursue such an inquiry with reference to the great complex system which makes up the sum of civilized life, would be nothing less than to write the history of social progress. I can only sketch in outline some of the general characters of such an inquiry.

We all of us live, and move, and have our being in an atmosphere, which, however impure, is still a Christian atmosphere. And this very fact renders it most difficult for us to say what, in any other atmosphere, the condition of our life might be. Modern civilization is the product of many causes; and in attempting to determine the precise proportion in which they have severally contributed to the general result, we are always liable to fall into one or other of two opposite errors:—either, on the one hand, to refer phenomena, for which the natural development of the human powers might sufficiently account, to causes essentially Christian; or, on the other hand, to attribute

to that natural development changes which, unaided, it never could produce. We have a given compound made up of known constituents. Is it possible to omit a principal constituent, and yet to produce an amalgam of equal worth? The subject refuses the solution of experiment in the laboratory; it is not possible to produce at will any combination of social activities for the purpose of ascertaining the result. All that we can do is to observe, in the pages of history, the operation of the human powers, unaided by Christianity; to mark the tendency of that operation, and to judge, as well as we can, how far that tendency seems to give promise of anything like the happy results with which Christian civilization has made us familiar.

If we note on a map of the world all the countries most distinguished for refined culture, for intellectual eminence, for the enjoyment of all that most ministers to material comfort, prosperity, and power, we find them to be Christian countries¹. This is no accidental coincidence;

¹ "The Christian thought, the Christian tradition, the Christian society, are the great, the imperial thought, tradition, and society of this earth. It is from Christendom outwards that power and influence radiate, not towards it and into it that they flow. There seems to be one point at least on the surface of the earth, —namely, among the Negro races of West Africa,—where

nor is it to be accounted for by any assumed superiority of modern intellect. Before Christ, there were intellects as great as the world has ever produced, and they achieved in art and letters, in conquest, and in government, triumphs which have never been surpassed. But their cultured powers of subtle reasoning, and their remarkable acumen, were strangely unproductive of those practical results which the human mind has yielded under the influence of the Christian faith.

It was long indeed before these results began to appear. But when we remember that the early Christians were for the most part unlearned, and that for generations after Christ the only schools of learning were heathen schools, it is not surprising to find Christianity exercising no great influence upon the operations of the intellect, before the inroads of the barbarians.

Mahometanism gains ground upon Christianity; but that assuredly is not the seat of government from whence will issue the fiat of the future to direct the destinies of mankind." *Mr. Gladstone*, *Contemporary Review*, June, 1876. The Report of the French Commission on the International Exhibition of 1851 says: "L'Exposition a démontré à tout le monde ce que les industriels et les armateurs de tous pays savaient; c'est que l'industrie n'existe réellement que dans les pays chrétiens." Tom. iv. p. 128, quoted by *Naville*.

From that date, all erudition was for ages confined to the clergy, and to them, as a matter of fact, modern society owes the preservation of ancient learning²; a circumstance which surely points to some natural affinity between the religion, of which they were the ministers, and the culture, of which they were the only guardians. The existence of such an affinity was more fully revealed as time went on, and as under the influence of Christianity, the intellect began to yield results unknown before. Other contributory causes no doubt there were, but Lord Macaulay is certainly right in saying, that "it is chiefly to the great Reformation of Religion, that we owe the great Reformation of Philosophy." Recalling the mind from wandering in fields of barren speculation, and pointing out to the reason the limits of its proper sphere, Christianity was largely instrumental in the production of the rich harvests reaped by later research.

For the inductive philosophy, of which that

² "Religion alone made a bridge, as it were, across the chaos, and has linked the two periods of ancient and modern civilization." "We certainly owe to the Church every spark of learning which then glimmered, and which she preserved through that darkness to rekindle the light of a happier age." *Hallam, Middle Ages*, vol. iii. c. ix. Part I, and note.

harvest is the immediate fruit, is trebly indebted for its success to Christian influences.

First, Christianity pointed out to human thought the new direction which it took.

Second, Christianity supplied thought with the link necessary to give conclusiveness to the inductive argument.

Third, Christianity taught the spirit in which the process must be pursued.

(1) Bacon's object was as new as was his method.

The pre-Christian sages, while sublimely soaring into the thin ether of unprofitable speculations, despised the practical object of improving the condition of mankind. To be the inventor of a useful machine was deemed so unworthy of a philosopher as to need an apology, and trade was regarded with contempt³.

Bacon, on the other hand, "loving to dwell on the power of the Christian religion to effect much that the ancient philosophers could only promise⁴," assumed the well-being of man to be the end of knowledge, and it was the desire to promote this, that stimulated all his labours.

³ *Plutarch*, *Sympos.* viii; and *Life of Marcellus*, quoted by *Macanlay*, Lord Bacon; see *Mahaffy*, *Social Life in Greece*, p. 259.

⁴ See *Macanlay*.

(2) Again—the foundation of the inductive method is the generalization of experience. But this generalization rests upon an assumption, which is based on the uniformity and simplicity of the laws of nature⁵. That an assumption so conformable to reason, might, in the hands of unaided reason, have brought forth fruit, I am not concerned to deny; though history supplies no grounds for supposing that it would. Starting from an hypothesis in direct antagonism to the whole world of appearances, it is conceivable that some genius might have succeeded in lifting the veil from the face of nature. This, however, no genius ever did, and the inductive method lay fruitless, until Christianity had taught men to believe that the world was the creation of one wise God.

But that rational hypothesis, which unaided reason never used, lay at the bottom of all Christian teaching from the beginning, and in time became the basis of scientific discovery.

⁵ "This (that is the inductive) inference is only rendered logically conclusive, or satisfactory to the reason, as anything more than a probable argument, by means of a generalization, which assumes on some extra-logical ground, such as the uniformity of physical laws, that the partial induction might have been rendered universal." *Hallam, Literature of Europe*, vol. ii. p. 398. Note. 4th Edition.

As long as men were taught, by polytheism, that the phenomena of the material world were referable to the discordant action of many gods; or by pantheism, that an explanation of nature's laws was to be sought, not by patient observation of nature's action outside us, but by reflective examination of the mind within, as exhibiting in consciousness those necessary laws, according to which the world has been evolved,—so long, their knowledge of nature made but little progress. But as soon as the Christian view of nature, so exquisitely set forth by some of the earliest Christian teachers⁶, had prevailed

⁶ "The heavens, that whirl in their orbits by His direction, are subject unto Him in peace. Both day and night accomplish, without impeding each other, the course which has been ordained by Him. Both sun, and moon, and choirs of stars, according to His ordinance roll harmoniously, with no divergence from their course, within the bounds which He has ordained for them. Teeming with life, the earth sends forth, according to His will, in the proper seasons, its abundant food, both for men and beasts, and all the living creatures that are upon it, without jarring against, or changing aught that He has decreed. Both the judgments of the abysses, that are inscrutable, and those of the nether world, that are inexplicable, are subject to the dominion of the same commands. The void of the boundless sea, being gathered together by His fashioning to its meeting-places, passes not beyond the barriers that have been placed around it, but does as He commanded it: for He said, 'Thus far shalt thou go, and thy waves shall be dashed together within thee.' The ocean, which men cannot pass, and the worlds beyond it, are directed

among thinking men,—when the belief, that the world is the work of one wise God, had led men to expect the laws of its government to be uniform and simple; when the belief, that its production is due to the voluntary action of a living Being, had taught men to search out those laws in the study of physical facts, and not in the field of consciousness; when all that men most revered as truth had become indissolubly

by the same ordinances of the Lord. . . . All these things the great Creator and Lord of all has ordered to be in peace and concord." *Clemens*, Epist. ad Cor. xx. Cf. *Irenæus*, "Unus autem et idem Demiurgus, qui et vulvam plasmavit, et solem creavit. Et unus idem Dominus, qui et stipulam eduxit, et triticum augens multiplicavit, et horreum præparavit." Then follows, after mention has been made of many objects, and phenomena of nature, "Qui autem ea facit, solus Deus veridicus est." *Contra Hæreses*, lib. ii. c. 47. This doctrine, thus taught by the early Church, was no esoteric philosophy held by a few, who continued to conform to the rites of polytheistic worship. It was the public announcement of a principle to be received by all, and the hold that it took of the Christian mind has not failed to attract the attention of *Humboldt*. He says (*Cosmos*, vol. ii. 392) "Christianity . . . expanded the views of men in their communion with nature It was the tendency of the Christian mind to prove from the order of the Universe, and the beauty of nature, the greatness and goodness of the Creator." He points out, how contact with the northern nations checked this intimate intercourse with nature, and gradually interfered with the study of its phenomena, until Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon boldly rent asunder the fetters of the intellect, and thus as it were absolved nature, and restored her to her ancient rights.

associated with this new view of nature, then, but not till then, did the inductive argument begin to acquire importance.

(3) Further:—those moral qualities so especially necessary⁷ to the successful pursuit of the inductive philosophy, are essentially Christian qualities. Humble docility, love of truth, patient resoluteness, were early recognised as distinctive marks of the Christian character⁸, and these are the qualities upon which Bacon so strongly insists⁹, and which so characterized the men in whose hands the inductive system began to bear its fruit.

It is a remarkable fact, that the most practical philosophers, the most fruitful intellects, the

⁷ "The great deeds of philosophers have been less the fruit of their intellect, than of the direction of that intellect by an eminently religious tone of mind. Truth has yielded herself rather to their patience, their single-heartedness, and their self-denial, than to their logical acumen." *Huxley*, *A Lecture to Working Men*, published in "The Builder."

In kindly writing to me on this subject Professor *Huxley* says: "By religion, Theology is not meant." My argument is historical, not theological; and as a matter of historic fact, the religion, which directed the intellect to enter upon its course of triumphant advance, was the religion of Christ.

⁸ *Friedlaender*, vol. iv. 323.

⁹ "Ut non alius fere sit aditus ad regnum hominis, quod fundatur in scientiis, quam ad regnum cœlorum, in quod, nisi sub personâ infantis, intrare non datur." *Novum Organum*, lib. i. Aphorism 68.

names that shine with the purest lustre on the roll of human benefactors as being the first founders¹⁰ of what most distinguishes modern progress, are to be found among the followers

¹⁰ The great pioneer of modern science, *Roger Bacon*, was a devout Christian. In his "Opus Majus" he describes all philosophy as a development of the principles contained in Scripture. The whole character of *Columbus* was deeply imbued with Christian earnestness and zeal. The journal of his voyage begins, "In the name of Jesus Christ." And of his voyage he writes, "The which I hope in our Lord will prove the greatest honour to Christianity ever accomplished with such care." *Copernicus* was a pious clergyman. In *Galileo*, Urban VIII. found "not only literary distinction, but the love of piety." Child-like belief in the Omnipresence of the Divine hand was a remarkable characteristic of *Kepler*. Of his friend *Tycho Brahé*, Sir David Brewster tells us, that "his daily conversation was elevated by a constant reference to a superintending Providence." The human frailty exhibited by Lord *Bacon* has supplied the satirist with matter for an epigram to point a moral. But, like Peter, he was bitterly stricken with penitential sorrow. His writings prove him to have been a man of a devout spirit, and his biographer (*James Spedding*, *Letters and Life of Francis Bacon*, 7 vols.) has shewn in detail that his religion supplied the motive of his labours. In writing to Dr. Bentley in 1692, *Newton* says, that, when he wrote the third book of the "Principia," he "had an eye upon such principles as might work with considering men for the belief of a Deity." He is truly described in the epitaph in the Abbey:—

"Naturæ, antiquitatis, S. Scripturæ

Sedulus, sagax, fidus interpres,

Dei opt. max. majestatem philosophiâ asseruit,

Evangelii simplicitatem moribus expressit."

The habitual piety of *Faraday* is known to everyone. Among

of Christ. All the great strides in the advance of the human mind in the exact sciences, of which we are so justly proud,—the inductive method; the laws relating to the heavenly bodies; the application of algebra to geometry; the differential calculus, and the like,—were discovered in a believing age, and by believing men, many of whom expressly refer their success to the influence of their Christian Faith. And if the philosophers of the present day survey the field of knowledge from a greater height than these men, it is only because they are mounted on their shoulders ¹¹.

Thus, while it is a matter of mere speculation, how far the unaided intellect might have succeeded in raising men to their present level of material prosperity, it is an indisputable fact of history, that they have attained that level by the aid of Christian influence.

Let us pass from the material prosperity to the moral well-being of society.

Here again we are met on the threshold by the sixty-nine members of the Academy of Sciences eulogized by *Fontenelle* (Eloges.) during a period of nearly forty years, there are probably not three, who were more devoted to learning than to piety.

¹¹ *Newton*, Letter to Robert Hook, 1685; cf. *Cyprian*, *Vita Campanellæ*.

the pregnant fact, that the improvement of society is throughout most closely connected with distinctly Christian agencies. We are sometimes asked, however, to believe that it is not because of, but in spite of these agencies, that the happy change has been brought about; it is simply the product, we are told, of reason and experience; it is due to the mild teaching of philosophy, and the gentle refinement of culture.

If this theory be true, then the pages of history ought uniformly to exhibit an improvement of morals, along with an increase of civilization. But the lesson taught by history is the reverse of this. Look where we will, we seem to find the same general law prevailing:—material progress accompanied, not by progress, but by retrogression in morals.

Whether we compare the Greek life portrayed by Homer¹², with the Greek life of the days of Pericles; or life under the early Roman Republic¹³,

¹² "The picture which Homer has drawn, if drawn in poetic colours, is none the less a picture of real life." *Gladstone, Studies on Homer*, vol. ii. 395. "Here first we see our kind set to work out for itself, under the lights which common life and experience supplied, the deep problem of its destiny. Nor is there perhaps any more solemn and melancholy lesson, than that which is to be learned from its continual downward course." Vol. i. 7.

¹³ *Hor.*, Carm. ii. xv. 105q.; cf. *August.*, De Civ. Dei, lib. v. c. 15.

with life under the Emperors, we find the same law in force¹⁴. Philosophy flourished in Greece, when the filthy plays of Aristophanes were received with general approbation. The Romans were devoted to learning, when Catullus did not blush to assert that poetry ought not to be chaste or reverent¹⁵. Reckless cruelty, degradation of women, slavery, corrupt administration of law,—plague spots of society, which we have seen vanish in presence of Christian influence,—are to be found at their worst, not in the primitive and rude stages of society, but when civilization and refinement had reached their greatest height¹⁶.

¹⁴ The operation of this law may be seen in the tendency of language to develop, in words originally honourable, a secondary debased meaning. And its force is witnessed by the fact that the secondary has sometimes supplanted the primary meaning. E. g. "τέχνη," "ars," "vertu," "chevalier d'industrie," "dirne," "frauenzimmer," "hochstapler," "animosity," "craft," "cunning," "play," "prude." The Ancients themselves were well aware that decadence in morals was the natural fruit of material success. Cf. *Horace*, Epist. ii. 1. 93 sq.; *Juvenal*, Sat. vi. 292 sq.; *Ovid*, Metamor. i. 137; *Seneca*, De Irâ, ii. 8.

¹⁵ *Carm.* xvi.

¹⁶ The representative man of Roman culture did not revolt at the butcheries of the arena. *Tusc. Disp.*, lib. ii. 16. The author of the Commentaries had no abhorrence of murder. *Comment.* iii. 16; vi; vii. *Appian*, De Bell. Civ., lib. ii. "So far from intellectual knowledge, in its highest form and type, insuring virtue and bliss, it is by no means uncommon to find great

Greece and Rome are the very fountains of all that is sublime and excellent in philosophy and letters. Even at the present day, it is by their standard that we measure the value of our own performances. And yet in Greece and Rome, at a time when art and culture were in their highest glory, those atrocities which Christianity abhors, flourished under the sanction of public authority.

But the strongest proof of the inability of society to preserve, as it advances in civilization, the vigour of morals that marked its ruder life, is furnished by the rise and fall of the nations of antiquity. Their prosperity invariably led to luxury; luxury to corruption and decay, the pestilential influence of which survived the people whom they ruined.

For in the history of the olden Empires we find the effete and demoralized nationality conquering its more robust conquerors. Persia

mental cultivation combined with great moral corruption . . . a combination remarkable in eras as in individuals. Petronius shews us a state of morals at which a common-place devil would blush, in the midst of a society more intellectually cultivated than certainly was that which produced Regulus or the Horatii. And the most learned eras in modern Italy were precisely those which brought the vices into the most ghastly refinement." *Lyttel, My Novel*, vol. i, 467.

demoralized Greece ; Greece corrupted Rome. With the fallen nation's life, its corruption does not die. It passes over, and roots itself in the ascendent people, to bear again in course of time the fatal fruit of ruin.

With Christianity comes a change. The conqueror is conquered still¹⁷, but now, no longer for the worse. Conquered Rome conquers in turn the victorious hordes of the North ; imparting to them, not the poison of corruption, —a baneful principle of death,—but the doctrines of Christ, which have proved a fruitful germ, wherever they have been carried over the face of the globe.

It is still objected, however, that notwithstanding the connection which we find actually to exist between the profession of the Christian Faith and material progress, Christianity is nevertheless no more than an insignificant factor in the evolution of modern society. If reason and experience have not, apart from Christianity, produced results equal to those which they have produced in combination with it ; if modern

¹⁷ "The customs of this most accursed people have gained the upper hand to such an extent that they are already received throughout the whole world. The conquered have given laws to the conquerors." *Seneca*, quoted by Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, vii. 11.

Europe enjoys a civilization superior to that of ancient Greece and Rome; it is only because in modern times culture has been able to work upon the better material of the Teutonic character. If the modern harvest is richer and better than the ancient, it is not because it is the growth of a new seed, but merely because the old seed happens to have fallen on better ground.

Without denying to the northern races the possession of some nobler national characteristics, I cannot but think that it is fashionable greatly to exaggerate this natural superiority. Nothing is more common than to institute a comparison between the good qualities noticed by Tacitus as characterizing the early Germans, and the vicious excesses of his degenerate fellow-countrymen in his own time. But such a comparison is idle for the purpose of our inquiry. It does not help us to form a right estimate of the yielding powers of two different fields, to compare the virgin vigour of the one with the effete langour of the other. And a just comparison of early Germany with early Greece or early Rome would tend, I think, largely to modify the popular conception of the superiority of the north. At all events, the recognition of the fact, that many of the fine qualities, wanting to the Greeks and

Romans in the days of their highest culture, had strongly marked the early days of their ruder life, would greatly diminish the force of the common argument from differences of race.

Admit, however, that the field in which the better harvest has grown may have a better soil. This will not account for the difference that we find in the harvest. The inferior soil was not so barren but that good seed sown in it might have at least shewn its nature, even though its yield were scanty. And we have already seen that culture, which brought forth of its own kind so abundantly, shewed itself powerless to produce fruit of that other kind, which grows from Christianity wherever planted.

Thus we are forced to believe that the superiority of modern civilization is the fruit of some seed not sown before, and not the fruit of the same seed in better ground.

And this belief is confirmed by experience,—verified by facts.

Twice in the world's history, the leaders of civilization seemed to be drifting into a godless creed. Alike in the first and in the eighteenth centuries, irreligion threatened to prevail. But no sooner, on either occasion, had the flood of impiety attained its highest level,

than it was rapidly followed by an irresistible reflux of feeling. A strong reaction towards a positive faith soon gained the upper hand, and took possession of a large part of cultivated society. So persistently does nature reassert itself, and imperiously claim its own¹⁸. When Julian attempted to restore society, the means which he employed was not philosophy, but religion purified by the aid of philosophy. The philanthropic Wilberforce attempted to civilize the natives of Western Africa without the direct aid of religion, and he failed in the attempt. A like effort for the benefit of the red man in Canada proved equally futile. In fact it would seem that man cannot live without religion.

But the influence for good which mere natural religion can exert is extremely uncertain. Grote is the author of a treatise which claims to prove that its general influence is mischievous¹⁹. Whether he is right or not, in contending that it is necessarily pernicious, history points clearly to the fact that it lacks the power to maintain, much more the power to improve the morals of men. In the

¹⁸ *Friedlaender*, vol. iv. 255 sq.

¹⁹ *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*. The Treatise was published in the year 1822, under the pseudonym of *Philip Beauchamp*.

earliest stages of society the faith of the people was simple, and their conduct pure and good²⁰. But this did not last; and as men became corrupt, their corruptions were transferred to their gods, whom they fashioned in their own image. Religion, thus polluted, could only tend to make mankind yet more impure.

Even in ages which have enjoyed the enlightenment of Christianity, the same impotence of natural religion is manifest. When men had been taught by the bitter experience of the French Revolution the necessity of religious principles²¹, as the only "solid basis of a good education, the only restraint against sin, the best consolation in adversity, and the most effective incentive to the discharge of every duty²²," (I quote their own words,) the Theophilanthropists tried to reform society by the principles of natural religion, omitting the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Their motives were good; among them were found men of character and position; the state

²⁰ Cf. *Mahaffy's Social Life in Greece*, p. 353.

²¹ "Vaincus d'effroi, ils proclament en hâte l'existence de l'Être Suprême, et l'immortalité de l'âme; et, debout sur le cadavre palpitant de la Société, ils appellent à grands cris le Dieu qui seul peut la ranimer." *Lamennais, Essai sur l'indifférence en matière de religion*, tom. i. 10.

²² *Manuel des Theophilanthropes*, 1797.

subsidized them; and nothing seemed wanting to the success of the enterprise. For a time it promised well. But it very soon died away, and left no trace behind. Chatel in 1830, and Ronge in 1844, repeated the experiment with no better success²³.

Others again have tried to tutor the savage mind by teaching natural religion without the Gospel of Jesus. For one hundred and fifty years the experiment was made, under the most favourable conditions, by the disciples of Penn in America; and it proved a failure. Missionaries have adopted the same plan, but always unsuccessfully. Indeed all experience tends to shew, that, in proportion as Christianity becomes forgetful of Christ, as the beginning and end of all its teaching, it loses its power over men. No book was more in the hands of the Anglican divines of the last century, than the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, which Mill calls "the highest ethical product of the ancient mind"²⁴. There never was a time when the pulpit of the Church of England was so much given up to the teaching of philosophical morality. And there never was a time

²³ For a fuller account of these attempts, see *Naville*, *Le Christ*, p. 113 sq.

²⁴ *J. S. Mill*, *On Liberty*, 1864, p. 48.

when the Church of England had so little hold on the people,—the more educated becoming indifferent to religion, self-sufficient, hard, and unlovely; while the poor and the sad flocked to the chapels and meeting-houses, which everywhere arose to meet the demand left unsupplied by the philosophic preachers of the Church²⁵.

These and similar facts, too often ignored by those who claim to speak for the age in which we live, have weight with all serious minds that apply themselves to the study of human history. Passing by all those writers to whom the suspicion of professional partiality might attach, it would be an easy task to draw up a long list of men, who, free from all such taint, have felt themselves forced to the conclusion, that no mere human power could ever have produced the changes in society which have been wrought by Christianity. And there is no publicist, no critic, no historian worthy of the name, who fails to recognize in the evolution of modern life, the action, at every stage, of influences which are historically traceable to Jesus Christ.

And it is plain that they are right. For what

²⁵ "We have, in fact, lost many of our people to sectaries, by not preaching in a manner sufficiently evangelical." *Secker, Charge.*

are the facts which are written large on the pages of history? Are they not these:—that the world was wrapped in darkness and in superstition; that idolatry and polytheism spread their errors and their shameful vices over the human race; that men were lying in a state of hopeless corruption; that Christianity has rescued them from this fatal condition, whenever and wherever it has been received; that the worship, in spirit and in truth, of the God Whom Christianity reveals, has taught to common men a philosophy at once more practical and more sublime than ever crowned the longings of heathen sage, a philosophy which pervades and purifies the very atmosphere we breathe; that where Christianity has never penetrated, human nature still remains debased; that those countries, which, once rejoicing in the light of Christianity, have cast it aside, have lost their place among the nations; and that finally, the moral, intellectual, and social activities which characterize the highest civilization, follow the steps of the preachers of Christ; die out and reappear with the worship of Christ; fall back or gain ground in proportion as they depart from, or abide by the precepts of the Gospel of Christ? Does not all this seem to declare that the highest civilization emanates from

Christianity; since, in Christianity, there is a power which raises human nature to a height that it has never attained without it,—a power that keeps it steady on its high level, and is helping it day by day to rise yet higher?

In a word, we cannot but recognize in Christianity a principle which gives to humanity such a perfection of intellect, of morality, and of manners, as humanity has never been able to give to itself, notwithstanding all the efforts of the ages before this principle was revealed; a perfection which can be found in no land where Christianity is not, and which has always vanished when Christianity is rejected.

CHAPTER VIII.

OBJECTIONS.

WE have seen that the condition of the world has been greatly improved under Christianity. We have seen how the improvement is traceable to the influence of Christianity. We have seen that nothing else in history has ever given promise of producing a like influence. Most candid readers will acquiesce generally in what has been hitherto advanced. But the acknowledgment that Christianity has proved itself superior to all other influences for good, is in no way inconsistent with the contention that it is not Divine. And the objector to its Divine claims invites us to pass from its successes to its failures. "We often hear," he says, "of all that Christianity has done. Will its advocates tell us why it has not done much more? It is unfair to take credit for all the good it has achieved, and to ignore the other side of the account. And this all the more, because that other side of the

account is inconsistent with its claim to come from a good God. For, if the Gospel were truly God's remedy for the sin of man, then, instead of the confused mixture of good and evil which surrounds us, we should have a very heaven upon earth."

The task of the Christian advocate would certainly be much easier, if the lives of all who professed the Christian Faith gave no occasion to the unbeliever to blaspheme the name of God. Able and telling as were the arguments of the early defenders of the Faith, there was probably no more serviceable weapon in their whole armoury, than the appeal which they so frequently made to the change of character effected by Christianity. For no doubt the silent voice of unobtrusive goodness, speaking in the blameless lives of the humble and the ignorant, called more unbelievers to the Faith, and more sinners unto righteousness, than all the apologies of the most learned controversialists, and the most eloquent preachers.

But there is evil among Christians. And the permission of evil under the supremacy of a Being Who is at once all-good, all-wise, and all-powerful, is to us inscrutable. It furnishes, however, no proof against the Divine origin of

Christianity; and to assert that it does, is about as reasonable, or as unreasonable, as to assert that human nature is not of God, because of the prevalence of sin and disease¹. With sorrow and shame indeed must it be admitted that things are not as they ought to be, either in the lives of individual Christians, or in the dominant tone of Christian society. It is not the Christian Faith, however, but human frailty, that is responsible for the evil which is commonly attributed to Christianity. In the page of history there are many blots upon the name of Christian. But it is only the most shallow bigotry which can make Christianity answerable for them. The worldly ambition, and the impure lives of some of the popes; the horrors of the Inquisition; the massacre of St. Bartholomew; the burning of witches:—to name such things is to convict them of the foulest outrage against Christianity. Convicted indeed they are. But by what law? By the law of Him Who denounces the lustful glance, Who proclaims hatred to be murder²,

¹ "To assert that it is useless, because it is not universally effective, were as absurd as to argue against the necessity of human laws, on the plea of their frequent violation." *Montesquieu*, *Esprit des Lois*, xxiv. 2. Montesquieu's answer to the objection that religion is useless is equally valid as an answer to the objection that it is not Divine.

² Matt. v. 22, 28.

Who will not permit His disciples to draw the sword in His defence³. If the apostles would call down fire from heaven, it was not because they were so taught of Jesus, but because they knew not of what manner of spirit His disciples ought to be⁴. And if the pages of ecclesiastical history are too often hideous records of fratricidal massacre, it is not because the Gospel is a teacher of vengeance; but because men fancied, in the blindness of their furious zeal, that to torture and to burn was to do God service, and to fight the good fight of faith. But whether the reproach against the cause of Christianity arises from the wilful sin, or the misguided zeal of its official guardians, we must remember that they are only men, always frail and blind, with the frailty and blindness of our nature, and sometimes utter strangers to that power which can effect the conquest of ignorance, prejudice, and passion. But even when the clergy were most corrupt, Christianity was still the salt of the earth. In the darkest times, when the significant severity of ecclesiastical laws points to a too general absence of moral culture in those to whom they applied, men who were denounced as heretics were able to win the hearts, and to change the lives of the

³ John xviii. 11.

⁴ Luke ix. 55.

multitude, by teaching them in homely and forceful language, if not always in most orthodox form, the message of the Gospel. And never,—not even in the darkest days of the Middle Ages,—did anti-Christian evil prevail over the good which men derived from the Christian Faith. In post-Reformation times, it became so fashionable to exaggerate the evil, and to ignore the good, that it requires no ordinary effort to weigh fairly the one against the other. But the matured judgment of Hallam strongly asserts that, even then, society was much indebted to Christianity⁵.

Unquestionably much un-Christian evil has been done in the name of Christ⁶. But what

⁵ "Beyond every doubt, the evils of superstition in the middle ages, though separately considered very serious, are not to be weighed against the benefits of the religion with which they were so mingled." *Hallam*, *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. c. ix. part 1, note [1848].

⁶ A closer inquiry into the origin of much of the specific evil, which serves as a basis for many of the popular objections against Christianity, often brings to light the strongest possible testimony to the prevalence of a conviction in the hearts of men, that the wisdom of the Gospel is above rubies. The term "theological hatred" has passed into a proverb of reproach. The proverb finds currency, not from any suspicion that hatred is in harmony with the spirit of Christ, but because of the vehemence with which men resent any opposition to what they regard as all-important truth. That men have often been mistaken as to what is truth, we know very well, and that we ourselves are mistaken, future generations will clearly see. But the very intensity of our jealousy for

does that prove?—that Christianity cannot have the Divine origin which it claims, because it has sanctioned the evil? It has never sanctioned it. Among all the abuses which have arisen, there is not one which is not condemned by the teaching of Jesus⁷. The true lesson to be learned

what appears to us to be truth, is the measure of the value which we set upon it. Again, a worldly ambitious spirit has often been found among the clergy. What then? Have they become worldly because they have been imbued with the spirit of Christ? Have they not rather taken office in Christ's Church, because they were worldly men? The very occurrence of such a phenomenon as a worldly clergy points to the value which men have set upon Christianity. For it was the rich endowments of the Church, and the high position of its officers, which attracted the worldly and ambitious to the Christian ministry. And whence came these endowments and this high position? Christianity first received the sanction of state support, not because of an emperor's caprice, nor merely as a new cult, to be used, as were the old, for purposes of secular government, but because, in the long struggle with polytheism, it had won for itself, under the belief that it was in very deed the power of God, an ascendancy in the hearts of the people. And the wealth, which in after times devotion poured so abundantly into the treasury of the Church, and the prominent position which society loved to accord to ecclesiastics, both bear witness to the power of Jesus to win from the human heart the homage which it pays to none save to its acknowledged God.

⁷ Lord *Bolingbroke* admits that "the wars, persecutions, and massacres among the Christians ought in no part to be ascribed to the Gospel, nor could be reconciled to its principles." Works, vol. v. 264, xxiv. 2. The shortcomings of Christians do not, according to *Rousseau*, "prove that religion is

from the occurrence of these abuses is rather this :—that the ideal of goodness, with which the Gospel has made us familiar, has been hitherto too high for us.

Christianity claims to convey to us from God new powers, and new inducements to use them. And it is not unreasonable to expect that these Divine gifts should be subject to laws somewhat similar to those which regulate our intellectual endowments. How does the matter stand with regard to these endowments? Before the coming of Christ reason had thousands of years in which to display the beneficence of its operation. The store of human wisdom, accumulated from many countries, was handed on from generation to generation. And, in spite of all the riches and beauty of that wisdom, men sank to the lowest depths of infamous degeneracy. Since the coming of Christ, society has been subjected to the influences of reason and of Christianity combined. Yet, notwithstanding this, sin and misery still abound. Men go from early childhood to the house of worship, and to the house of learning. But they have not yet ceased to find their way to the haunts of vice, and to the cells of correction,

superfluous, but that very few persons are religious." *Emile*, tom. iii. 199.

No argument, however, which is based on this sad fact, disproves the Divine origin of Christianity, any more than it disproves the Divine origin of reason. The question whence a gift proceeds is in no way touched by the fact that it remain unused, or be used amiss. God gives us brains; and they are none the less His gift, because we do not use them. He endows us with physical strength; which is still His endowment, though we ruin our constitution through excess. So too, He has implanted in us certain natural desires, to prompt us to exercise and to improve both our intellectual and our physical powers. In all the ages that man has lived upon the earth, these desires have not sufficed to make him work out for himself physical perfection; and for thousands of years they produced but little intellectual progress. Yet no one has ever argued from this, that our natural promptings to exercise our bodily powers, or that the instinct of curiosity, and the sense of pleasure that accompanies the acquisition of knowledge, cannot therefore be from God.

But it may still be urged, that, though its claim to be from God may not be disproved by its failing to lead men to perfection, yet, if it were Divine, Christianity would at least have made

some ampler provision for the attainment of that perfection.

What ampler provisions could it have made than that which it has made? The remedy, which Jesus offers to suffering man, is no induced paralysis of any part of his manifold action; but a fuller supply of healthful energy, and more abundant life. As a remedy to heal the distempered will, it has never failed, when duly applied, to strengthen men to eschew the evil, and to choose the good. Short of compulsion, more it cannot do. To demand any imperious interference with the freedom of human action is to require the introduction of a new thing into the government of the world, and to require it moreover just at the point where it is least admissible. Such a violent inversion of some of the laws of God which regulate the material world might possibly involve no apparent impropriety. But the compulsion of a will that is free is an impossibility. The very notion cannot be stated without a contradiction in terms. The objection utterly mistakes the nature of virtue, which is dependent for its very essence upon the freedom of the will. And so long as man is free, so long must it be open to him to do wrong, as to do right; to disregard, or to misuse the proffered aid of

heaven, as to apply it rightly, and to experience its power. As soon as we recognize this fact, the difficulty disappears. For, if from the very nature of the case, the sufferer's free and active co-operation be a necessary condition of his recovery, it is no objection against the efficacy of the remedy, that it does not compel him to use it. Christianity does not claim to be a magic spell, which will make mankind, in spite of itself, more prosperous, more happy, and more good. The Christian is no more exempt from the influence of evil, than the Muhammedan or the pagan. The apostles themselves declared that they were men of like passions with the heathen around them⁸. And we have a record of specific errors⁹ in the three among them, who were in closest intimacy with their Lord. Notwithstanding all that Christianity has done, or may do to improve mankind, evil still remains, and will remain¹⁰;—the evil that grows out of human ignorance and human frailty. But there has been, and there is no evil in the world, of which Jesus is the author.

But though the disease survives, both in the individual and in society, its virulence has been

⁸ Acts xiv. 15.

⁹ Mark xiv. 66 sq.; Gal. ii. 11; Luke ix. 54.

¹⁰ See Articles of Religion, IX.

sensibly checked, and its force distinctly abated, under the treatment of Christian influences. This is admitted on all sides. And few thinking men seriously deny that, if Jesus is to be regarded merely as a man, His influence upon the world entitles Him to rank as the foremost among men. There are many, however, to whom all that He has done seems too little, if He is to be accounted Divine.

Have such men fully appreciated the magnitude of the power which He has shewn Himself to possess? In order to form a true estimate of the virtue of a remedy, it is not enough to consider merely the present state of the patient's health. It is further necessary to take account of the malignancy of his malady, and the way in which the offered remedy has been applied.

The state of the world before the birth of Christ shews that no aggravation or complication was wanting to the disorders of humanity with which Christianity had to deal.

How has the remedy been applied? It has been applied rightly and fairly, both by individuals and by communities. And whenever it has been so applied, it has always produced results which it is impossible to pronounce unworthy of its Divine claims. The holy lives of individual Christians,—as well the lives of the countless thousands who

have lived and died in obscurity, as the lives of those who are revered as saints throughout Christendom,—attest the matchless power of Him in Whom they have trusted. And the same power is no less testified by the general effect of Christianity upon the community in the first centuries, and by its effect in our own day upon savage tribes ¹¹.

But the remedy has not been always fairly applied. The very success of Christianity in mastering society, and so bringing about its establishment, led to a diminution of its moral power. As soon as it became a source of repute and advantage to be a Christian, many professed the Faith of Jesus, who were strangers to its spirit. And in process of time, misguided zeal forced Christianity upon multitudes who were quite unmeet for its reception. This wholesale introduction of unconverted converts, whether they were baptized from interest or under compulsion ¹², cannot fairly be regarded as a proper application

¹¹ See chap. iv, note 8, p. 60; also Miss *Bird's* Sandwich Islands; and the Reports of the Missionary Societies, *passim*.

¹² In extending the borders of Islam by the sword, the Mussulman was only following the example of Muhammed, and obeying the commandments of the Koran. He was merely putting in practice the spirit of his religion. But all attempts to propagate the Christian Faith by violence necessarily defeated themselves.

of the Gospel to human nature; and the subsequent fall in the level of practical morality cannot therefore be put in evidence, as proving that Christianity is wanting in power.

Moreover, the new relation between Christianity and the state, from its very nature, involved much which still further impeded the efficiency of its operation. Experience has proved the extreme difficulty of duly adjusting civil power and ecclesiastical authority, in respect of the many problems of life which are at once religious and social. Out of regard to secular interests, men have been placed in power, to whom religion was not the first concern. And as an inevitable result, both ecclesiastics and statesmen,—the two classes most largely possessed of opportunity to contribute to a fuller development of Christian principles,—have too often failed to use it. Statesmen in power have sometimes lacked a comprehensive knowledge of what Christianity teaches. Their motto has been *quieta non movere*; and their influence, instead of fostering, has often checked that spirit of diligent searching inquiry inculcated by St. Paul, which is so necessary for the full development of Christian principles. On the other hand, the ecclesiastic, instead of large-hearted charity and single-minded love of truth, has too often

exhibited theological hatred, narrow bigotry, and party rancour. He has too often mistaken the spirit of Christianity, and misapplied its precepts. He has lavished time and effort, in the vain attempt to solve, what to man in his present state, must ever remain unsolved. And the energy that ought to have led Christians to victory over the evil and the sin, which they all acknowledged to be their common foe, has been dissipated in variance and strife about trifles, in which they could not agree. As an inevitable result, there have arisen jealousies, leading to hatred and uncharitableness, to divisions and feuds, which oftentimes survive the love of good from which they took their perverse being. Vital truth has been sacrificed to outward form, and morality has been regarded as secondary to orthodoxy. What has been presented to the world as Christianity has therefore been, too often, sadly diluted and adulterated through human frailty.

But we must further take account of the many circumstances which have interfered with the due application of the remedy, not only while it was still comparatively pure, but even after it had become thus corrupted. And when we remember the character of its environment; how, as a new religion intolerant of the ancient faiths, it had to

contend with all the inveterate stubbornness of hereditary prejudice and superstition; how, as a law of life enjoining the practice of purity and justice, it was opposed by all the customs and inclinations of a society wholly given up to self-indulgence; when we remember that, for centuries, the Christians were without schools of learning; that, in later days, it was but a vague conception of the Gospel, that a gorgeous ceremonial and a foreign tongue could give to an unlettered people; when we further remember the part that Christianity has played in the face of these difficulties, in cleansing away the corruptions of the old world, and in evolving the purer culture of the new; the surprise, to thoughtful minds, will be, not that Christianity has done so little, but that it has had power to effect so much. For even if the Gospel had been worthily offered to mankind in its genuineness through the past eighteen centuries, the time is too short for the production of that moral perfectude which is demanded.

All growth is slow. Growth in the community is much slower than growth in the individual. And moral growth is slower than intellectual growth, knowledge being acquired with pleasure, and self-control with pain. The harvest reaped by the individual intellect may be stored for the

use of the community, and accumulated from generation to generation. But the fruits of the moral harvest, gathered with difficulty by the individual, are not available in the same way for the benefit of the community, or for the use of the future.

In the intellectual field one generation enters fully into the labours of that which has preceded it. Yet, notwithstanding all this, ignorance prevails largely with the mass of mankind to the present day. This however is not surprising, when we remember that mental enlightenment could not spread until after the invention of the printing-press. And, if it be no difficult task to account for the survival of ignorance at the close of the nineteenth century, the continuance of evil should surely occasion no difficulty to the thoughtful mind. For, as any great rise in the general level of intellectual attainment was impossible, before the art of printing began to open its channels for the diffusion of knowledge, so any conspicuous advance in morality was impossible, until intellectual attainment, going before, had given men the power to grasp moral principles. While still incapable of seizing moral principles, as such, men often give them more or less effect, under the impulse of zeal for some cause espoused. But until principles are intelligently laid

hold of, as principles, they cannot be expected to make way with mankind, even at their normal rate of progress. And, as in morals no age can leave, to that which comes after it, more than the benefit of its experience and the force of its example, that rate is necessarily much slower than the rate of intellectual progress. The whole history of advancing civilization shews with what extreme slowness the march of improvement proceeds. Here and there we find the noblest and the best outrun, in thought and in endeavour, the generation to which they belong; but even these are held back by the strong fetters of public sentiment, and can do but little to accelerate the general advance of the multitude. To expect therefore that Christendom should present only a picture of moral perfection is altogether unreasonable.

For the production of the physical world, the geologist is obliged to assign an indefinite series of prehistoric years. If then such unknown cycles of duration were necessary to build up what we see in nature, out of materials most marvellously meet for the building, is it reasonable to say that Christianity is not from Him Who gave to protoplasm its being and its power, because, in such a short period, it has not transformed all the evil with which it has had to do into unalloyed goodness?

But though the remedy has been fitfully and imperfectly applied, it has largely mitigated the suffering of man. Announcing Himself as come to seek and to save the lost, Jesus called upon men to follow His commands in faith. Feebly and ignorantly, but not without sincerity, they have responded to His summons; and we have seen how in consequence they have become better¹³, happier¹⁴, and more prosperous¹⁵. Christianity has succeeded in teaching men to set a new value upon human life. It has banished the domestic tyranny which sat enthroned in Roman law¹⁶. It has sanctified marriage, and lifted up woman from the mire. It has exalted labour, and made industry cease to be a degradation¹⁷. It has overthrown the barriers that separated class from class¹⁸. It has freed the slave. It has provided homes and help for the sick and needy. It has made the law merciful, and the administration of

¹³ Chapter iii.¹⁴ Chapter iv.¹⁵ Chapter v.¹⁶ Witness the change from the irresponsible rigour of the "patria potestas."¹⁷ *Rossi*, Bibliothèque Universelle, December, 1867, pp. 503 sq. Cf. the honourable sense in which words denoting labour are used in Christian countries, with that which belonged to the Greek *névos*, or the Latin "labor."¹⁸ *Robertson*, Hist. of the Christian Church, vol. ii. part i. p. 247; *E. de Pressensé*, La Vie ecclésiastique, religieuse, et morale des Chrétiens, aux II^{me}. et III^{me}. Siècles, liv. III. chap. 3.

the law just. It has stayed the madness of revenge, and checked the cruelties of war. When the world was given over to outrage and oppression, its voice alone was raised in condemnation; its ministers were the sole protectors of the weak against the strong; and its temples were the only sanctuary from violence. It proclaimed the Truce of God, and taught men stained in blood to learn the arts of peace¹⁹. Under its influence ferocious manners have been softened, and the violence of passion²⁰ has been curbed. It has revealed to man the priceless blessing of liberty, and is teaching him to attain it. It has tamed the savage, and restrained the infuriate commune²¹. It has cheered the lot of the lunatic, and poured light into the darkness of the dungeon. It has elevated art²², raised the tone of literature, and given to the critic the standard whereby he

¹⁹ *Gieseler*, vol. ii. c. vi. 36; *Naville*, *Le Christ*, p. 43.

²⁰ There is good reason to believe that, in calling anger a short madness, the ancients spoke from experience of a state of things which has happily passed away.

²¹ *Pasteur Bost* of La Force, the *Rev. R. W. McAll* of Auteuil, and *Miss de Broen* have received, in the strongest form, the public recognition of the Government of France for their invaluable work among the Communists.

²² *Chateaubriand*, *Génie du Christianisme*, partie iii. liv. 1; *Töpffer*, *Réflexions et Menus propos d'un Peintre genevois*, tom. 1, pp. 127 sq.

measures the shortcomings of Christians. Abroad it is regenerating continents ²³; at home it is enlisting in its service the hope of the coming age ²⁴; it is restoring the outcast, fighting the demon of intemperance, and awakening in society a sense of its danger from the deadly canker of impurity.

²³ "I speak simply as to matters of experience and observation, and not of opinion; just as a Roman præfect might have reported to Trajan or the Antonines; and I assure you, that, whatever you may be told to the contrary, the teaching of Christianity among 160 millions of civilized, industrious Hindoos and Muhammedans in India is effecting changes, moral, social, and political, which, for extent and rapidity, are far more extraordinary than anything you or your fathers have witnessed in modern Europe. Presented for the first time to most of the teeming Indian communities, within the memory of men yet alive,—preached by only a few scores of Europeans, who, with rare exceptions, had not previously been remarkable among their own people in Europe for intellectual power or cultivation, who had little of worldly power or sagacity, and none of the worldly motives which usually carry men onward to success,—Christianity has nevertheless, in the course of fifty years, made its way to every part of the vast mass of Indian civilized humanity, and is now an active, operative, aggressive power in every branch of social and political life on that continent." *Sir Bartle Frere*, *Christianity suited to all Forms of Civilization*, 1872.

Speaking on the above subject, *Lord Lawrence* said, "I believe, notwithstanding all that the English people have done to benefit that country, the missionaries have done more than all other agencies combined." *Life of Lord Lawrence*, by *R. Bosworth Smith*, vol. ii. p. 609.

²⁴ It was stated on authority at the Congress in Reading (Oct. 1883) that one in eight of the undergraduates at Cambridge are regularly engaged in some distinctly Christian work.

These are some of the effects upon the condition of man in this life, which are historically traceable to the influence of Jesus. And in producing them Christianity has re-established in their primitive splendour the natural principles of reason and morality; has added to them new force and lustre; has made them instinct with a life and a fruitfulness unknown before. Teaching a morality at once more pure and practical, more simple and sublime, more reasonable and more perfect than men have learnt elsewhere, it has produced and still continues to produce, not in a few individuals, but in millions of human beings, a goodness all its own. For it alone has had power to convert the admiration of the mind into the burning of the heart, and to transform the fair visions of goodness that broke from time to time upon the heathen's dream ²⁵ into the reality of actual life, and thus to effect in the history of mankind such a change, as has never been satisfactorily accounted for, on the assumption that its Author was no more than man.

What then is the meaning of the charge of failure against Christianity? It cannot mean that

²⁵ *Socrates* compares the knowledge acquired by Philosophy to the dream of an old woman in delirium.—*Gorgias*. Cf. *Cicero*, *Acad. Quest. lib. iv. c. 38*, "Somnia sunt non docentis, sed optantis."

it has failed to fulfil the promise of its Founder. For He taught expressly that the tares should grow together with the wheat until the harvest. It cannot mean that it has failed to effect as much as,—assuming it to be from God,—we might reasonably expect; since the analogy of His own dealings with us forbids us to look for premature perfection. It can, therefore, only mean that it has not satisfied the impatient desire of man to hurry the “slow successive steps” of God ²⁶.

In effecting all these changes in the condition of men, Christianity has from first to last shewn itself to be possessed of a power and vigour peculiar to itself. The philosophers before Christ were content to go “over the theory of virtue in their thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it.” As a natural result ²⁷, their action produced in many of them a “habit of insensibility to all moral considerations.” Their words were often wonderful. Their moral power was trifling ²⁸. Christianity converted the “passive impression” of what is good into the “active principle” of

²⁶ *Butler*, Analogy, Part II. c. iv. Cf. *Guizot*, Lectures on Civilization in Europe, Lect. 1.

²⁷ *Butler*, Analogy, Part I. c. v.

²⁸ Before Christ, men’s chief difficulty lay, not so much in saying what was right, as in doing it. *Seneca*, Epist. 108.

goodness. And its effect has always been both immediate and abiding. As at its call in the early days, the unlettered multitude forsook, at once, the lust and cruelty of civilization, exacting from the heathen sage ²⁹ a homage to the blamelessness of their lives, so now,—believing and being baptized,—the savage abandons his inhuman practices, and in a few short years exhibits virtues which long ages of culture failed to give to the Greek and to the Roman. It was by virtue of its peculiar energy, that Christianity triumphed over heathenism, supported as it was by all the power of the monarch, the learning of the sage, and the prejudice of the people; and that, in spite of the bitter antagonism of the Jews and the persecution of the pagan government, it so completely mastered society, before three hundred years had passed, as to oblige Constantine to make it the religion of the state.

The same energy is again displayed in the stability and progress of those nations which have held to the Christian Faith. The dreadful law of the inveterate persistence of evil is still in force. But under Christianity the effect of its action has been greatly checked. And this fact acquires a new significance, when we further consider to

²⁹ See above, chapter iii, note 50, p. 52.

what a vast extent the instruments of that action have been multiplied by the progress of modern refinement. In former times, the direct influences of luxury affected but a comparatively small section of society. In the highly-civilized nations of our own time, the whole population is subject to them. And yet,—though the demands upon the preservative energies of society increase with its artificial wants, and though those wants have been multiplied more in a decade of our times than in centuries of the past,—in Christian countries the store of energy has been sufficient to meet the demands³⁰. All this presents a most striking contrast to what we find outside Christendom. The history of those non-Christian nations which have most advanced in civilization presents in every case the same outline. Their aim has been an earthly aim; and it has been pursued by such artificial means as seemed best adapted to its attainment. They have succeeded for a time. But their rise and progress is inevitably followed by their decline and fall. Their sowing is of the

³⁰ Thoughtful men, who cannot in any way be charged with narrowness of mind, or ecclesiastical bigotry, do not hesitate to make known their belief that Christianity is the only power which can counteract the evil influences of luxury. See *Morality in Public Schools, and its Relation to Religion*, by the Head Master of Clifton College.

earth, earthy; and they reap the natural harvest of corruption and decay³¹.

Again, to the latent energy of Christianity is traceable the comparative ease with which those countries most imbued with its spirit have passed through periods of political change. The doctrine of obedience to civil authority was no new doctrine³². But, supporting it by the sanction of conscience, and producing in the popular character those affections and dispositions of which voluntary submission is the natural fruit, Christianity first succeeded in adjusting the balance, between the authority of the ruler and the liberty of the subject; and where such adjustment was impossible, it taught men to work out the problem of political progress without the periodic recurrence of wild paroxysms of violence. In our own country, where happily the principles of the Gospel have more than elsewhere imbued the intelligence of the people, the Restoration and the Revolution were

³¹ "Mahometanism rapidly degenerated. The descent from Saladin to a modern Moslem despot is like a fall over a precipice." *Froude*, *Short Studies*, vol. i. The learned societies of Europe discuss the reasons of the decadence of Muhammedan civilization. They do not dispute the fact. They only wish to know whence it comes. See an Article, "Sur les Causes de la Décadence actuelle des Nations musulmanes," quoted by *Naville*.

³² *Cicero*, *Ad Divers.* i. 8; *Tacitus*, *Hist.* iv. 8; *Sophocles*, *Œdipus Tyr.* 863 sq.

effected with no great interruption of public peace, being little more than easy transitions, in place of horrible convulsions, as they would have been under pagan or Muhammedan governments³³.

Another peculiar characteristic of Christianity, which distinguishes it from and elevates it above all philosophies and all religions ever known, is its adaptability to meet the needs of human nature in every form. The philosopher of old ridiculed the idea of comprehending all men under one universal faith³⁴. Modern scientists would have us believe that all the various religions of the world are the natural developments of a common sentiment, modified by the influences of race, climate, and circumstance. According to this theory, each religion is fitted only for the race which has evolved it. According to this theory, it follows that Christianity must be more than such a development; for, alike in the first century as in the nineteenth,—alike in the visionary East as in the practical West,—the emperor and the

³³ *Hume*, Hist. of England, 4to, vol. v. p. 337; *Taine*, Hist. of English Literature, vol. iii. c. iii. p. 3. "Nos gouvernements modernes doivent incontestablement au Christianisme leur solide autorité, et leurs révolutions moins fréquentes; il les a rendus eux-mêmes moins sanguinaires: cela se prouve par le fait, en les comparant aux gouvernements anciens." *Rousseau*, *Emile*, tom. iii, p. 199.

³⁴ See above, chapter ii, note 25, p. 19.

slave, the savage and the student, have found it to supply their highest needs.

In every variety of circumstance it has had power to improve mankind; and the operation of its influence for good is not limited to those who accept it consciously. Every human relation, and every human interest has received the mark of its beneficent impress. Our laws, our institutions, our manners, are one and all cast in a Christian mould³⁵. We live in, and we cannot escape from, the atmosphere of Christianity. In fact, our whole environment is Christian in its origin. The equality of men in the eye of the law; the spirit of tolerance; the demand for justice; the growing ascendancy of right and reason over might and violence; the increasing tendency to realize the universal brotherhood of mankind:—all these are characteristics of modern civilization. But, though the professors of Christianity have

³⁵ "La philosophie chrétienne est la base de notre existence sociale; elle alimente la racine de notre droit; et bien que tout le monde ne s'en rende pas compte, nous vivons, bien plus par elle que par les idées échappées à la ruine du monde grec et romain." *Troplong*, Séances et Travaux de l'Académie des Sciences morales and politiques, tom. i. 316, A.D. 1842 (quoted by *Naville*); and *Droit Civil*, *passim*. "The peculiar character of this period (1492-1661) is determined by the Reformation." "England acquired its character as a State during this period... religion was the basis." *Heeren*, History, pp. 13, 79.

often been slow of heart to learn them, there is not one of these which was not preached and practised by Christians, long before it established itself in the laws of the state, in the customs of society, and in the public conscience ³⁶.

In few things indeed is the peculiar power of Christianity more apparent than in the elevation of this public conscience, and the consequent diminution of public crime. We have already seen that, under the most favourable circumstances, morality makes but slow progress: and we have also seen that a highly-developed civilization is a hindrance rather than an aid to it. And yet we find, at the present day, a strong public moral sentiment prevailing in Christian countries. For with Christianity has come a mighty change in the history of crime. Before Christ it was public, social, national. The perversity dwelt not only in the hearts of individual men, but in the very heart of society itself,—in its laws, in its institutions, in its customs, in its public opinion, in whatever appertains to social life. Since the preaching of the Gospel, crime still abounds; but it is under a ban. Evil

³⁶ *Guisot* frequently shews this, especially in what he says of the legislation of the Visigoths. *History of Civilization in France*, Lesson XI.

doing is now so entirely disavowed by the public reason,—so disowned by the conscience of society,—that it has almost come to be regarded as the result, as much of misfortune or of folly, as of depravity. Crime among us, even when it affects or claims a national character, is, for the most part, in reality the crime of individuals. Collective crime is daily growing less. And, whatever be the failings of man individually, the tide of public morality is beyond doubt a rising tide. There is a tendency to observe only faults among Christians, because the rule of virtue is the only standard which they admit; just as certain enthusiasts have observed only virtue among pagans³⁷, because vice was the normal characteristic of their life. In non-Christian countries, examples of goodness were so rare as to attract universal attention. In Christian countries, we pass unnoticed, every day, what is really much nobler virtue. What attracts our attention there, is not the goodness which gives its value to the picture, but the blot of sin that mars it.

Other influences no doubt have had their share in the production of some of these results. But

³⁷ Witness the uprightness of Fabricius, the continence of Scipio, and other memorable instances of merit so rare as to attract special attention.

it is not unreasonable to claim them for Christianity; seeing that, without its aid, the combined action of all other causes together, operating under the most favourable circumstances, has failed to yield them; while the simple acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus, alone, always succeeds in evoking them in some measure, even in the midst of the corruptions of heathenism and the chaos of barbarism. It succeeds, because Jesus, unlike the great among men, has had power to implant in the human heart such a principle of devotion to Himself as no other can inspire. The ideas which great thinkers have called into life have a lasting value. Great men do no doubt leave behind them that which influences the history of succeeding generations. But no man has been able to bequeath his power of inspiring personal devotion to himself. Yet time, which so soon destroys the magic of personal influence, has in no way diminished the sway of Jesus over the hearts of men; He has still the power, as when He was on earth, to make men feel that He is more than the founder of a creed,—that he is their Saviour, their Lord, and their God.

In fact, His sovereignty is everywhere, if we have only eyes to see it. His religion teems with a power that makes its presence felt on

every side. His disciples exhibit, in the measure that they are imbued with His Spirit, and transformed into His image, something of that grace which He first gave to humanity,—a grace more potent than sympathy, and stronger than the cords of a man to draw the human heart. Who is ignorant of this grace, although it has no name? Perceiving in the words of Christian saints a sweetly subtle charm, supremely exquisite, surpassing the charm of eloquence, and taking it for the radiance of a spiritual light reflected from the ineffable halo of tenderness and power that encircles the head of Jesus, for lack of a better name, men have called it “unction.” But what we understand by “unction” is only one particular manifestation of that power of Jesus which is found wherever the Gospel is sincerely accepted. There is no relation in life in which He does not put forth this same power in such a way as to shew, beyond a doubt, that it is high above the might of man. He makes the simple the instructor of the learned, as he who is summoned to minister consolation at the bedside of a dying child or a working man can often testify, when, experiencing the presence of that strength which is made perfect in weakness, he himself receives a new supply of courage and of

hope. And as thus, to them that have no might, Jesus increaseth strength, so also does He lay help upon them that are mighty. For it is His matchless power, that has enabled the greatest monarch of the earth to win from the hearts of men a homage which is not bounded by the limits of her sceptre's sway. Never has potentate, who was not the servant of Christ, gained the affections of mankind, as has she, who, under the eyes of men, has ordered her whole life by the Gospel rule; and who, by firmly withstanding the evil and upholding the good,—avowedly for her Master's sake, and in her Master's name,—has given to the world such a conspicuous example of the power of a Christian life.

One who stirred the world to its foundations,—the typical man of genius in modern days,—is said³⁸ to have acknowledged that the virtue which goes out of Jesus on all those who truly believe in Him, is not only unique, but superhuman³⁹.

³⁸ The authenticity of the account has been called in question. But this is immaterial. The force of the contrast cannot be denied, though it may well be that Napoleon himself never recognized it.

³⁹ *Sentiment de Napoléon Ier. sur le Christianisme, d'après des témoignages recueillis par feu le Chevalier de Beauterne*, Paris 1864, p. 94 sq.: "Il n'en est pas de même du Christ. Tout de Lui m'étonne; Son esprit me dépasse, et Sa volonté me confond. Entre Lui et quoi que ce soit au monde, il n'y a pas de terme possible de comparaison. Il est vraiment un être

Looking back, in his exile, upon his own marvellous career, he is struck by the contrast which

à part : Ses idées et Ses sentiments, la vérité qu'Il annonce, Sa manière de convaincre, ne s'expliquent ni par l'organisation humaine, ni par la nature des choses. . . . Je cherche en vain dans l'histoire pour y trouver le semblable de Jésus-Christ, ou quoi que ce soit qui approche l'Evangile. Ni l'histoire, ni l'humanité, ni les siècles, ni la nature ne m'offrent rien avec quoi je puisse le comparer ou l'expliquer. . . . Tout est pour moi un prodige, je ne sais quel mystère insondable . . . qui me plonge dans une rêverie, dont je ne puis sortir, mystère qui est là sous mes yeux, mystère permanent que je ne peux nier, et que je ne puis expliquer non plus. . . . Ici je ne vois rien de l'homme. Plus j'approche, plus j'examine de près, tout est au-dessus de moi, tout demeure grand, d'une grandeur qui écrase, et j'ai beau réfléchir, je ne me rends compte de rien. . . . Enfin, . . . il n'y a pas de Dieu dans le ciel, si un homme a pu concevoir et exécuter, avec un plein succès, le dessein gigantesque de dérober pour Lui le culte suprême, en usurpant le nom de Dieu. . . . Tous ceux qui croient sincèrement en Lui ressentent cet amour admirable, surnaturel, supérieur : phénomène inexplicable, impossible à la raison et aux forces de l'homme ; feu sacré donné à la terre par ce nouveau Prométhée, dont le temps, ce grand destructeur, ne peut ni user la force, ni limiter la durée. Moi, Napoléon, c'est ce que j'admire davantage, parceque j'y ai pensé souvent, et c'est ce qui me prouve absolument la divinité du Christ. . . . Maintenant que je suis à Ste. Hélène, . . . maintenant que je suis seul, cloué sur ce roc, qui bataille et conquiert des empires pour moi ? Où sont les courtisans de mon infortune ? Pense-t-on à moi ? Qui se remue pour moi en Europe ? Qui m'est demeuré fidèle ? . . . Certes, je possède le secret de cette puissance magique qui enlève l'esprit, mais je ne saurais le communiquer à personne ; aucun de mes généraux ne l'a reçu, ou deviné de moi ; je n'ai pas davantage le secret d'éterniser mon nom et mon amour dans les cœurs, et d'y opérer des prodiges sans le secours de la matière. . . . Si

it presents to the deathless triumph of the Crucified. He himself, still living, sees the rare magic of his own power over men vanished, as though it had never been. And he feels himself separated by an impassable gulf from Him Who, long since dead, still reigns everlastingly in the hearts and affections of His people. He seeks in vain to find on earth aught that can compare with Jesus or His Gospel. Their power is a mystery too high for him,—a mystery which he declares to be beyond the reach of human reason, and which, as he can neither explain it nor deny it, becomes to him an incontestable proof of Divinity. He finds it impossible to believe, that any human being could, by the mere assumption of the name of God, filch from humanity the devotion that it gives to none, but to the Supreme; and he sums up his review, by asserting his positive conviction, as one who knew men well, that Jesus Christ was more than man ⁴⁰.

moi, qui les avais si souvent menés à la victoire, je n'ai pu, vivant, réchauffer ces cœurs égoïstes, par où donc, étant glacé par la mort, parviendrais-je à entretenir, à réveiller leur zèle ! . . . Quel abîme entre ma misère profonde et le règne éternel du Christ, prêché, encensé, aimé, adoré, vivant dans tout l'univers. . . . Est ce-là mourir ? N'est-ce pas plutôt vivre ? Voilà la mort du Christ ! Voilà celle de Dieu !"

⁴⁰ "Je me connais en hommes, et je vous dis que Jésus-Christ *n'est pas un homme.*"

Was Napoleon wrong in judging thus? If he was, what account is to be given of the fact that so many millions of men of all countries, nations, and languages, separated by mountains, rivers, and seas, held apart by differences of speech and of interest, with nothing in common, except prejudices to be overcome, and passions to be subdued, have exulted to find in Jesus an Example to imitate, a Saviour to love, and a God to adore? How are we to explain this common outburst of devotion? To what shall we ascribe this great Amen, that rings throughout the ages, in response to His call, and echoes still from every corner of the earth?

The world deformed its primitive faith. The Faith of Jesus is transforming the world. Can we resist the conclusion that He, Who thus renews the face of the earth, is the same Who first gave man his being? Surely it puts a far greater strain on human credulity⁴¹, to believe the sovereignty of Jesus to be based upon a lie, than simply to accept His own account of it:—"The Father, abiding in Me, doeth His works⁴²."

⁴¹ So, at least, thought Dante and St. Augustine.

"S'el mondo si rivolse al christianesimo,

Diss'io, senza miracoli, quest'uno

'E tal, che gli altri non sono 'l centesimo."

Dante, Il Paradiso, canto xxiv. "Hoc nobis unum grande miraculum sufficit," *S. Aug.*, De Civ. Dei, xxii. 5.

⁴² John xiv. 10, New Version.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE READER.

THE effects of Christianity upon the condition of man in this life,—effects historically traceable to the influence of Jesus, and never produced, or likely to be produced by any other influence found in operation,—do not indeed demonstrate the truth of Christianity, but certainly they establish at least a *primâ facie* case in its favour. From these effects,—these fruits of Christianity,—we are at least justified in concluding, that it is highly irrational to reject it lightly, and without submitting its claims to the most rigid scrutiny. The firm establishment of such a conclusion I believe to be a matter of most vital importance at the present time, when men of high personal character, holding a prominent position in the scientific or in the literary world, are said to assert that Christianity is false. We all know that science and criticism have advanced with giant strides, effectually exploding much that was long

regarded as true. Most of us do not profess to be familiar with the mysteries of scientific or of critical research. We are unable to form for ourselves an independent judgment. We do not trust ourselves to decide how far the apostles of modern progress have succeeded in establishing the premises from which they reason; often we do not even attempt to examine the correctness of their reasoning. We cannot help seeing, however, that it is constantly and confidently asserted, or quietly assumed, in learned books, in magazines, in the daily press, in social conversation, that the light which they hold forth has driven away that darkness in which alone it was possible for the Christian Faith to live.

This state of things has produced in different minds very different effects. To the careless it gives a ready pretext for his unconcern. It persuades him who wishes not to lag behind the advance of thought, that the whole question is already decided. And it afflicts many earnest and good men with much perplexity and unrest.

Now to all these classes, I think, the facts which we have considered address a word in season.

No process of reasoning will ever, I believe, awaken the indifferent out of his indifference.

But, if any consideration can have power to stir him into inquiry, it should be the reflection, that it is not by living in neglect, much less in contempt, of Christianity, that men have attained,—in the measure that they have attained,—to the noble and the good.

The appeal to the practical effects of Christianity, however, may hope to come with greatest force to those whose vague scepticism is due only to the influence of prevalent fashion. In these days of advanced thought, they would be men of thought. To their thought, then,—to their own judgment,—the appeal is directly addressed. It invites them to consider facts which are open to all; and from those facts to draw their own conclusion.

In ancient times, leisure and travel were necessary for the acquisition of such learning as was attainable. Men of extraordinary genius devoted their lives to the pursuit of knowledge, and wandered far and near to gather its accumulated stores from every quarter¹. If Christianity be only the outcome of the natural powers of man, how came it to pass that the humble tradesman of a despised country town in Galilee,—a man un-

¹ *Plato*, for instance, visited Megara, Cyrene, Italy, and Egypt in pursuit of knowledge. *Diog. Laert.*, Vita Platonis.

travelled and unlearned,—has produced a philosophy that dwarfs all previous human thought, and has wrought a work which stands alone in the annals of human story? How was He able to purge away the evil, and not only to retain, but to increase the good? On what reasonable principle are we to account for His being able to reveal to mankind, in the fulness of its perfect beauty, a light of which the greatest philosophers could but vaguely dream? Why is it that, in the countries which to-day lead the van of progress, not one in a hundred has ever heard of those giants of human intellect; while the youngest child in the village school is taught to lisp with reverence the name of Jesus Christ? “Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” Think, and judge for yourself.

So far as you may have relaxed the bonds that hold you to the faith of your fathers, you have done so, not in consequence of any independent judgment of your own. You have done so,—and it is important that you should fully recognize the fact,—in obedience to authority.

You cannot become wholly independent of the opinion of others; and you should not, if you could. It is not the sign of a thoughtful and truth-loving spirit, to ignore the conclusions at

which others have arrived. No sound critic, in any department of human culture, is ever disposed to slight the results of experience, because that experience is not his own. In every concern of daily life, we all constantly defer to the judgment of those whom, for any reason, we regard as more fit to judge than we are ourselves. In questions that refer to law or medicine, painting or music, we defer to those whom we believe to be especially qualified to speak on those several matters. In doing so, all sensible men admit that we do only what is reasonable and right. Is there anything in the nature of the case, then, to make that which is, in all other matters, reasonable and right, unreasonable and wrong in the matter of religion? Are men, possessing, as they do, such a variety of endowment in other respects, equally qualified to judge, when the question to be decided is a religious question? It would be absurd to affirm that they are. But when men use language which implies such an affirmation, inveighing against authority in favour of Christianity, they are, in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, doing so in deference to authority opposed to Christianity.

You are not to be censured then, merely because you allow your action to be influenced by

the opinion of others. But surely you are bound to make most careful use of your own judgment, in deciding what kind of opinion has a right to influence you.

Perhaps you say that you defer to the opinion of the ablest. Well, what is the opinion of the ablest? The ablest of the modern men of science, upon whose authority we are asked to reject Christianity, have, many of them, carefully refrained from drawing from their researches the conclusions adverse to our religion, to which we are asked to believe that those researches lead. At a meeting of the British Association, eight hundred men of science, including among them names of the highest eminence, declare that they find nothing in the march of science to shake their faith in Christianity². But, even were it otherwise, it is no disparagement of the ability of

² "We conceive that it is impossible for the Word of God, as written in the book of nature, and God's word written in Holy Scripture, to contradict one another, however much they may appear to differ. We are not forgetful that Physical Science is not complete, but is only in a condition of progress, and that at present our finite reason enables us only to see as through a glass darkly; and we confidently believe, that a time will come when the two records will be seen to agree in every particular." *The Declaration of Students of the Natural and Physical Sciences.* Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., London, 1865. The original signatures are placed in the Bodleian Library.

all those who either are, or are supposed to be, teachers of the falseness of our faith, to assert that, regarding them simply as men of intellectual power, it is idle to weigh their authority against that which must be placed in the opposite scale. We have seen that the great leaders of discovery were Christian men. Devoting themselves to the pursuit of truth in all its branches; spending their lives in search of it; bringing to the task all the energy and singleness of purpose of which our nature is capable; shewing by their discoveries in every department of knowledge that they knew how to recognize truth;—these men received Christianity as true. We see them proclaiming Christianity, and professing it, not only by their writings, but by their actions. Christianity is the foundation alike of their conduct and of their studies³. Can it be, that on this one point they have all been deluded, and yet that, starting from this initial error, they have been led by it to discover truth in everything else? Is it reasonable unhesitatingly to pronounce that so many master minds, to whom the world is indebted for so much of its knowledge of truth, have been deceived from beginning to end with reference to the Christian Faith, because the statements of

³ See chapter vii, note 10, p. 127.

some eminent men, who have entered into their labours, have received a popular interpretation antagonistic to that Faith?

Without dreaming of putting our own intellects in competition with the intellects of those savants, who are said to reject Christianity as contrary to reason, we, common men, need not fear that, in receiving it, we are justly open to the charge of acting irrationally. We can easily see indeed that Christianity stands in directest antagonism to certain fundamental hypotheses. But until those hypotheses have become unquestionable truths, and truths moreover which are undeniably inconsistent with the claims of Christianity, we may rest in the comfortable assurance, that the Faith, which numbers among its defenders a Butler and a Pascal, has not been shewn to be contrary to reason⁴.

Consider these things, and say whether you

⁴ I was much struck by a remark made to me lately by a gentleman, who holds a prominent position in the scientific world. He said "It is a mistake to suppose that scientific men are opponents of Christianity. Those who give themselves the trouble to think the matter out are the sincerest Christians. They reject much, it is true, that they were brought up to regard as of its very essence. But they arrive at a conviction of its vital truth, to which they were strangers, when they gave it a general and passive acceptance."

The lives of men like James Hinton practically illustrate the

are quite sure that there exists any intellectual authority adverse to Christianity, to which you may judiciously surrender your own private judgment. Are you quite sure, that, in doing so, you are not a victim of the fallacy which Hume has so ably exposed,—the fallacy of which Hume's own argument is such a notable instance,—the fallacy of representing "popular prejudice as philosophical reasoning"?

But you greatly err, if you suppose that intellectual power is the true measure of authority on religious questions. For what are the qualifications which a man must possess, in order to render his judgment in any matter valuable? We always regard his views as worthless, unless, in addition to what we are in the habit of calling sound judgment, we believe him to be endowed, in a high degree, with the faculty appropriate to the matter in hand, and to have had good opportunity to use that faculty. It would be absurd to set any value upon the criticism of one of Raphael's pictures, coming from a critic admittedly colour-blind or ignorant of art; or upon a review of the works of Beethoven, by one who confessed that

truth of *Bacon's* remark, "that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." *Essays; Of Atheism.*

he had no ear, and that he had never experienced an ecstatic thrill at the sound of music in his life. Whatever words you would use to express my obliquity of perception, if, upon the worthless verdict of such incompetent judges, I were to assume that neither Raphael, nor Beethoven, has power to charm the sense, or to stir the heart of human beings; no weaker terms would suffice to describe my pitiable state, if, upon the equally worthless verdict of equally incompetent judges, I were to allow myself to dream that Jesus has no power to save men from their sins. If you will allow the prudence, which you praise in every other case, to guide your judgment here, you will give but little heed to the estimate of Christianity, which is formed by those who tell you that they know no God, or that they have never attempted to apply to themselves the teaching of Jesus Christ.

In the very foremost ranks of the giants of thought, we meet with many who have found in the Divine philosophy of Christianity, more than scope for all their powers; many who must be regarded as among the most competent to judge of its excellence. But the value of their judgment does not rest wholly, does not rest even chiefly, on their intellectual eminence. There is no

testimony to the worth of a remedy, equal to that of him who has put it to the proof. If we are satisfied that a man who once suffered has ceased to suffer, by reason of a remedy applied, we do not, in order to estimate the value of the remedy, trouble ourselves to inquire into the extent of his intellectual powers. The true verdict concerning Christianity is not to be sought in the speculations of abstract reasoning, but in the "clean heart," and "right spirit," of those whose moral health it has renewed. And they all declare with one voice,—and declare, too, the more heartily, as longer experience renders their testimony more valuable,—that the Faith of Christ is the sovereign remedy for human ills.

As the power of painting, and the power of music, each becomes known to us through the instrumentality of special faculties severally appropriate to them, so it is with Christianity. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned⁵. By presenting to a man who had little or no perception of painting or of music, an array of facts, and by reasoning from these, I might hope to induce him to deem it credible, that influences existed in the world of which he had no direct knowledge. But the first adequate idea of the nature and

⁵ 1 Cor. ii. 14; cf. 2 Pet. i. 9.

power of those influences must come to him through the development of what we sometimes call "a taste" for music and for painting⁶. Even so it is with respect to Christianity. Your own spiritual discernment alone can make you to know fully its truth and its power. Nevertheless, reasoning from the facts that surround us, an unprejudiced mind may arrive at the conclusion that Christianity is most probably true. Farther than this *mere reason* cannot go. And yet, in going so far, it has already advanced a long way,—much farther than it is often supposed. Bishop Butler has pointed out, that, in cases which do not admit of demonstration,—*i.e.* cases in which reason is at fault,—we are often bound, in point of prudence, to adopt a certain course of action, on a very slight preponderance of probability; and sometimes even when the chances are greatly against our succeeding⁷. To state the question in its barest form:—On the assumption that it is only an even chance whether Christianity be true or false, it cannot be doubted but that it is infinitely safer to act as if it were true.

⁶ "A number of men possessed of a sixth sense, of which we had not the least idea, would find but few brought over to their opinion that they were possessed of such a sensation. Their pretension would be construed into pride or folly; but those whom the Most High should endow with the same sensation would easily believe." *Milner*.

⁷ *Butler*, Analogy, Introd.

The man who does so loses nothing, if it should turn out to be false; while he who assumes its falseness may be risking all, in the event of its being true. Nothing short of absolute certainty that the whole system,—which has never been reasonably accounted for except on the supposition of its truth,—is a hollow mockery, a vain delusion, could justify a prudent man in disregarding its claims, or in renouncing, in deference to any authority, his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

The fair-minded man who gives himself the trouble to reflect, cannot then be indifferent to Christianity. And yet, after all, if his judgment be dependent upon fairness of mind alone, if it be unaided by prompt and moral perception, and quick spiritual discernment, it is highly probable that he will not be satisfied with reference to its claims. Mere reasoning must encounter difficulties which it cannot overcome. If the finite could fully comprehend the infinite, it would cease to be finite. No exercise of the highest intellectual power can ever find out the Almighty to perfection. He reveals Himself, not to the clear head, but to the pure heart. And, if the Christian be asked for a reason of the hope that is in him, he answers, "I believe in Jesus Christ, —*would* God that I believed more earnestly, and *more actively*,—I believe in Jesus Christ, because

I am no mere thinking machine, but because I am a man. If I have a head to think, I have also a heart to feel. And in my best moments, I know that my heart is the best part of me." In using language like this, the Christian is not helplessly shifting ground,—the last resource of a beaten advocate, and practically an admission of defeat in argument. Rather is he shewing himself the true philosopher, widening out his view, so as to embrace within it all the phenomena presented to him, and not merely a selection of them. He accepts indeed as an ultimate fact not to be doubted, something which does not rest on demonstrative proof. But so does every one who believes in his own personal identity, or in the existence of matter. He pays, it is true, a willing homage to that part of our nature which feels, that he withholds from that part of it which thinks. But, in doing so, he does no more than the man who has wearily thought himself out of belief in the existence of a God. If, in matters with which the culture of the head is most concerned, some dear friend of such an one exhibit any glaring lack of understanding or attainment, he experiences the tingling discomfort of confusion and shame for him. But it is not so in those things which constitute the more peculiar domain of the heart. There he will listen, with

a sentiment of commingled envy and pride, to the most illogical utterances that issue from the lips of a Christian mother, whom he knows to have found in religious feeling a higher standard of life, than his own cultured reason has enabled him to apply to his own conduct. Instead of thinking it a duty to undeceive her, he feels that it would be nothing less than sacrilege to disturb the calm peace that reigns in the depths of her faithful heart,—though to that peace he is himself a stranger. It is no uncommon thing to meet those who suffer acutely, on account of what they look upon as the educational shortcomings or social defects of their intimate friends. But I have never known, and I trust it may never be my lot to know, the man who blushes for his sister's devoutness, or his mother's faith.

Thus do men pay homage to that part of our nature which we are in the habit of designating by the comprehensive term "heart." But it is very often an unconscious homage. And it is necessary to be on our guard against a danger, to which the intellectual and the learned are more exposed than the simple and unlettered,—the subtle but very real danger, which arises from the fact, that that part of our nature which thinks is too prone to consider itself so immeasurably superior to that *part of it which feels*, as to refuse to it any judicial

voice, in the decision of a question which it has once made the subject of pure speculation. Thought and culture have a tendency to exalt themselves unduly. The man who has had the advantage of a good education, who is conscious of all the augmented power that belongs to a disciplined and well-ordered intellect, is tempted to despise the condition of his uncultivated brother. He feels as though he lived in another and a higher world. From his vantage-ground he looks down upon those beneath him. And, prone to measure himself by the standard of their lower level, he is liable to appraise too highly the value of that in which he excels them. In warning you against this tendency, I certainly have no desire to depreciate intellectual superiority. I only ask you not to forget a frailty common to our nature,—the universal proneness of the human mind to think of its powers more highly than it ought to think. The man of average ability, and of average culture, happily finds a counter-agent to this predisposition, in the generous rivalries of his school and college days, and in the earnest struggles of the wider world of his after-life. But, unless endowed with that rare modesty which is the peculiar characteristic of the highest genius, the mind, which is so unfortunate as to have no familiar intercourse with equals or superiors, has more difficulty in overcoming this

innate frailty. I do not know how such a one can better serve himself in this matter, than by bearing in mind the attitude of those whom the general consent of mankind conspires to rank among the very first thinkers;—of a Socrates, claiming to be wiser than the philosophers of his time, on the ground that, while they all alike knew nothing, he alone was aware of the fact; of a Bacon, demanding intellectual humility as the first condition of successful inquiry; and of a Newton, comparing himself to a little child at play upon the beach, who, now and then, picks up and examines with delight a broken shell, or a wave-worn pebble, while the fathomless ocean of truth, with all its vast treasures of knowledge, lies unexplored before him.

In conclusion, let me say a word to those whose minds are troubled by the prevalence of scepticism.

In the midst of so much to disturb, I think there is much to reassure. In days gone by, the discoveries of astronomy must have caused much like anxiety for the safety of the Faith. Those discoveries, instead of destroying our belief, have vastly enlarged our views of God's universe, and corrected many errors in our conceptions of Divine revelation. The Christian of to-day gratefully acknowledges that he owes his emancipation from such errors, and his ever-deepening insight

into the verities of his Faith, in large measure to that spirit of inquiry, which to his fathers was but a painful evidence of growing unbelief. Even such, I doubt not, will be the issue of the present flux of thought. And indeed the very character of the present flood of scepticism, when compared with former visitations, ought to give us encouragement. Indications no doubt there are of a widespread revolt against all religious restraint. This, however, is no new phenomenon in the history of Christianity. And much, very much, of the present inquiry is anything but irreligious. Nay the testimony which it pays to Jesus is very remarkable. It shews that the human soul is drawn to Him by more than the cords of a man. It shews that there is a sort of instinctive and irresistible attraction,—a sympathetic charm,—by which the human soul is won to Christ. Being lifted up among them, He draws all men unto Him. Converse with Him,—nay, converse with those who know Him, makes men, whether they will or no, a little less unlike Him. Even those who deny His authority, cannot wholly reject His influence. It has been well remarked^s, that it is a rare thing to meet with any fair-minded man, who, being an avowed enemy of Christianity, fails to pay some tribute of homage

^s *T. Colani*, Sermons, x. 1858.

to it nevertheless. He may find fault with it as being too rigorously austere, but he will praise its philanthropy. He may blame the humility of Jesus, but he will admire His purity and His courage. Another may revolt at the mention of a miracle, but he will be carried away by the Sermon on the Mount. Indeed every man, without exception, is attracted to Jesus in one way or another. It is impossible to resist Him completely, and the influence which He has over us is an influence for good, even when it does not go so far as to transform us altogether. Judge Christianity simply by the admissions which it has wrung from opponents, and there still remains the remarkable fact, that, in different ages and distant countries, men, who have had nothing in common, except their unbelief in Christ, have borne such testimony to His influence, as summed together, presents a picture of a power for good which, apart from Christianity, the world has never seen. All unconsciously, the souls of men approach nearer and nearer to their Lord and Saviour, Whose goodness is the personification of that ideal after which they yearn. Before His birth of the Virgin, He was the Desire of all nations. Never was He more than He is to-day the Hope of all the ends of the earth⁹.

⁹ *The numerous "Lives of Jesus," written from so many different points of view,—from that of the implicit believer to*

But if, in spite of all considerations of this kind, you are really troubled by doubts about the Christian Faith, you should know, that few speculative minds begin to apply themselves seriously to the consideration of Christianity, without encountering difficulties more or less painful¹⁰. And I would earnestly urge upon you the thoughtful consideration of Bishop Butler's remark, that such doubts may constitute a principal part of some

that of the critical sceptic, and even from the wholly external position of the Hindu,—and read with such avidity by the present age, bear testimony to the fact that, whether consciously or unconsciously, “all men seek” Him still, as they did when He lived upon the earth; and, if we are to believe what travellers tell us, the Muhammedan mind is deeply stirred by the hopes of an approaching great deliverance, to be wrought, not by Muhammed, but by Christ.

¹⁰ “You will also meet with some objections against Christianity itself, which must, as long as we are in this present state of imperfection, appear objections of great real weight. Now this should neither surprise nor dishearten you; for the condition of Christianity in this respect,—of being open to many seemingly weighty objections,—is the condition of almost all the best attested facts in history, and even the most certain principles of science itself. The stories of Julius Cæsar, or of Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance, are full of things *in themselves* quite *improbable*, which yet we believe to have happened, because it is *more improbable* still, that the testimony on which those stories rest should be false. ‘There are,’ said Dr. Johnson, ‘objections against a *plenum*, and objections against a *vacuum*; but one of them must be true.’ And a wise man will, in such cases, believe that which involves, on the whole, least improbability.” Cautions for the Times, pt. iii. no. xxix.

men's probation¹¹. Though it is not easy to conceive of greater torture than ceaseless doubt, nevertheless, some difficulty in coming to a peaceful determination on certain points, in a question of such vital moment, may often prove a great blessing. The delay of anxious suspense will allow time for the elements of character already acquired to grow, and to gain strength for new conflicts. The progress may be slow and painful, but its results will be good and lasting. There are trees which in sunny climes rapidly attain huge dimensions, but their timber lacks firmness and solidity, and under exposure it soon decays; while the same trees, planted in colder regions, and obliged to brave the snow and ice of cheerless winters, require centuries

¹¹ Analogy, pt. ii. c. vi. *Paley's* remarks are worth quoting. "Irresistible proof would restrain the voluntary powers too much; would not answer the purpose of trial and probation; would call for no exercise of candour, seriousness, humility, and inquiry; no submission of passions, interests, and prejudices to moral evidence and to probable truth; no habits of reflection; none of that previous desire to learn and to obey the will of God, which forms, perhaps, the test of the virtuous principle, and which induces men to attend, with care and reverence, to every credible intimation of that will, and to resign present advantages and present pleasures, to every reasonable expectation of propitiating His favour. Man's moral probation may be, whether they will take due care to inform themselves by impartial consideration? and, afterwards, whether they will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have? and this, *we find by experience*, is often our probation in our temporal capacity." *Evidences*, pt. iii. ch. vi.

in growing up; but, when at length matured, they are so hard and tough, as wellnigh to defy alike the woodman's steel and the lapse of time. Even so, long exposure to the trials of doubt, though it check the growth, may none the less consolidate the fibre, of Christian character, and make at last a man who can endure and overcome.

But in these days we hear perhaps too much in praise of honest doubt. Not to be at rest in matters of religion is a strange ground for self-complacence. Mere wavering is no sign of mental vigour. Neither is the fact that we do not at present see the truth, any proof that truth cannot be found. Seek the truth with humble, honest, patient quest, and you will come to know the truth at last. For, "if any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God¹²;" and "if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you¹³." In the meantime,—whatever be your belief, whatever be your doubt,—remember, that in judging of the claim of Christianity to be from God, the true question is not "Has it done all that I have expected it to do?" but "Has it done more than man can do?" Not "Has the tree brought forth the fruit of which my fancy dreamed?" but "Has it yielded,—as no earthly tree can yield,—food to

¹² John vii. 17.

¹³ Phil. iii. 15.

renew and to strengthen the enfeebled life of man?" And, whatever difficulty you may have in honestly resolving this question of its Divine origin, remember further, that, if you reject Christianity, you reject the one thing which, beyond all others, has shewn itself able to strengthen the weak hands, and to confirm the feeble knees; you refuse to hear the one voice which has said with power to them that are of a fearful heart, "Be strong: fear not." Remember, that if you reject Christianity, you have nothing left but a morality, which,—no longer knowing anything as absolutely right, or absolutely good,—sinks into a poor system of regulated selfishness, utterly incapable of awakening any enthusiasm of virtue in the mass of mankind, and utterly unworthy to become a standard of human conduct. Be mindful, then, of the fruits which Christianity has borne, and still is bearing; and, I adjure you, as you love your kindred, your country, yourself, let not yours be the impious hand to lay one stroke of the axe at the root of such a tree.

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